

POLITICS AND ETHICS

Dr Grete Hermann worked in close collaboration with Leonard Nelson, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Goettingen, prior to his death in 1927. This brief volume is fundamentally at one with the writings of Leonard Nelson and the spirit of his life and work. It seeks to interpret in what respects "the time is out of joint" and to promote discussion of the principles that ought to govern society. Its purpose is to stimulate thought and practical effort in two directions. The deeper search for a satisfactory philosophic system and the practical political struggle to secure the application of ethical principles in society. Only in the fulfilment of these tasks lies any worthwhile future for mankind.

POLITICS AND ETHICS

By

GRETE HERMANN



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CHAPTER I

A MORAL PROBLEM

THE CRISIS OF OUR TIME

THE economic and political catastrophes of the 20th century are indicative of a more fundamental crisis. Something is radically wrong. Institutions, inventions, discoveries which might have lightened human toil, liberated the capacities of men and enriched the content of life are being used to bewilder, destroy and enslave mankind. Man himself has produced the means whereby in recent decades the devastation of war and the shock of economic crises have attained ever greater dimensions.

The continuous and rapid advance of the natural sciences, of man's technical skill and organising ability have placed in the service of man a power over the forces of nature almost undreamed of a century ago. Distances can now be quickly bridged, goods carried and exchanged all over the world and the fruits of the earth brought forth abundantly for the use and benefit of all. Yet these very achievements have also made it possible for economic crisis to spread from one country to another until almost the entire world has been caught in its grip. Technical progress is largely concentrated on contriving ever more deadly means of destroying human life and goods, and then on competing with these by devising still more deadly counter-weapons. The evil mankind has suffered from man's knowing and mastering the forces of nature by far exceeds everything those blind forces themselves have been able to do.

The dawning recognition of this fact causes widespread

uneasiness to-day When we see the great achievements of human skill and inventiveness being misused to bring us all under an increasing threat of war and starvation, our thoughts turn to the search for a way out of the dilemma

Anxiety is apparent in many of the public discussions on questions of the day and the morrow Scientists and politicians alike reveal their concern For instance, at the Conference held in London in 1941 by the British Association for the Advancement of Science, the discussion turned again and again from the immediate economic, medical, technical and organisational problems of the war and the post-war world to the problem of how the results of scientific research could be safeguarded from abuse, how they could be made a blessing to mankind instead of a curse

Contributions towards a solution of this problem varied in depth of insight The American Ambassador in London, Mr J. G. Winant, pointed out that

"The healing hands of science and the constructive powers of mechanical art are an essential part of any brave new world But they too have to be freed from Nazi power For Nazism has stolen and run amok with the great inventions of free and inquiring minds and is using them not to liberate but to enslave the human spirit."

It is certainly true that the Nazis succeeded only too well in their efforts to enslave the minds of men, but in what sense can they be accused of having "stolen" for this purpose? Where has there ever been any responsible body which has undertaken to preserve the dangerous weapon of scientific discovery from misuse? What have scientists, what have democratic governments done to *ensure* that the results of scientific research could not be used for evil purposes? The discoverer of dynamite founded a Peace Prize, but failed to ensure that control over his discovery was placed in the hands of peace-loving men Democratic governments, claiming to serve the cause of peace and freedom, have permitted the scandal of the international armaments industry to go on unchecked. Nor has there been any responsible supervision

of the complicated mechanism of economic institutions. In the hands of men animated by lust for profits or power—and there are others besides Hitler and his associates—technical skill combined with the art of economic organisation has spread chaos, starvation and distress throughout the world. To counter the forces of destruction it is certainly not enough to demand the expiation of the crimes of the Nazis, the exaction of restitution as far as it is possible, and guarantees that Nazi crimes will not occur again.

At the Conference referred to above, the Czech President, Dr E. Benes, went more deeply into the problem. He asserted

“ . . . this is not a problem of technology but a problem of human morals and enlightened human politics. The question is how to place the great inventions of modern technology into the hands of good, decent people in a decent and well-guided social and State organisation ”

The same question applies to other scientific discoveries and inventions, to economic relations and to the vast field of organisation. The handling of them is a problem of morals applied to politics.

THE FAILURE OF LIBERALISM AND MARXISM

There is to-day a call from many quarters to gauge political action by moral or religious principles, in order to find a way out of the crisis which has overtaken our civilisation and culture. What is the significance of this and what does it demand of us ?

In the first place we must note the negation implied by this appeal. The old belief, held for generations, that the natural interplay of individual and social forces would, by and large and at any rate in the long run, bring mankind forward and upward, that the misuse of scientific and organisational achievements would be overcome or reduced to ever smaller proportions, is admitted to be a deception, to be misleading and false. There is no such harmony of forces and interests in human society. A serious student of our

times, Paul Tillich, has remarked in his pamphlet *War Aims**

“ The belief in an automatic harmony . which became the informing principle of the political and social structure of occidental society has broken down ”

In the 19th century this belief took two forms, the *laissez-faire* theory of Liberalism and the teaching of Karl Marx

The Liberal theory rested on the assumption that there was a natural balance of interests in society If, therefore, each individual followed his own interests, the good of all would be achieved in the best possible way Every man knows he is dependent on his fellow men for the satisfaction of his interests It follows that he will consider the interests of others even if only on grounds of expediency Each individual has an interest in seeing that the life of society proceeds in a well-regulated, predictable way Consequently, everyone will submit to the law and order maintained by society, thereby voluntarily placing limits on his individual freedom of action.

Karl Marx exposed the fatal error in this theory He showed that the mutual dependence of men on one another is not so fully balanced that each is compelled to respect the interests of others in order not to jeopardise his own Society is split into classes and nations with different degrees of access to the goods of life The contractual relationships existing between members of different classes or nations are not, as Liberalism imagined, the result of a free weighing up of interests resulting in a fair balance On the contrary, these relationships correspond to the given power relationships ; they are dictated by those who are economically and politically the stronger, whose only restraint is their fear of provoking counter-forces which they might not be strong enough to overcome. In this struggle the weaker submit, not because the given social relationships appear fair to them, but because submission is the price they must pay for any share in the social product In these circumstances it is no wonder that the diligence and inventiveness of men are not devoted first

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and foremost to the advancement and good of mankind, but to the defence of power positions and the suppression of rivals

The sociological investigations of Marx penetrated deeply into these workings of society. He showed how even morality, religion and cultural achievements come to be misused as weapons in the struggle for positions of economic monopoly. Yet even Marx assumed that the forces working in society would of themselves inevitably sweep away such abuses and bring into existence a social order of a higher form. Certainly the mechanism Marx looked to for this development was no longer the imaginary balance of interests and forces, he knew there was not and never had been any such thing. But he believed that in his analysis of the economic forces in their impact on the social structure he had found the law of the development of society. The "immanent laws of capitalistic production itself," he argues, bring about the centralisation of capital, the conscious technical application of science, the transformation of instruments of individual labour into instruments of labour only usable in common, the entanglement of all peoples in the net of the world market.

"Along with the constantly diminishing number of the magnates of capital who usurp and monopolise all advantages of this process of transformation, grows the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation, but with this, too, grows the revolt of the working class, a class always increasing in numbers, and disciplined, united, organised by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself. The monopoly of capital becomes a fetter upon the mode of production, which has sprung up and flourished along with and under it. Centralisation of the means of production and socialisation of labour at last reach a point where they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. This integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated."*

* Karl Marx · *Capital*, Chapter 24

These prophecies have been as little fulfilled as were those of Liberalism. The misery of the masses has not increased with the accumulation of capital. It has grown gradually less, though certainly it has not been eliminated anywhere. This improvement in the conditions of the masses has not removed class divisions and exploitation, but it has checked the prophesied revolt of the exploited and encouraged the hope that the path of gradual reforms is a better way to attain a just social order than revolutionary struggle with the risks and sacrifices it entails. Many workers soon had more to lose than their chains, and the number grew of those who did not want to risk in a struggle for emancipation the little they had gained.

So the working class has not been driven to inevitable revolt. Neither have members of the possessing classes been driven to mutual slaughter until the last survivors inevitably fall before the revolutionary onslaught of the masses. The possessing classes have shown themselves to be more inventive than Marx foresaw. By means of trusts and other forms of economic organisation, competition between individuals has been brought within limits consistent with the interests of the groups holding the key positions of power. To forestall revolution the possessing groups make certain concessions to the masses and, where these no longer suffice, they hire or permit men lacking all scruples to quell the threat of revolution for them by imposing a system of naked terror.

NO BELIEF IN AN AUTOMATIC HARMONY

It cannot be denied to-day that the forces working in society offer no guarantee of a naturally harmonious and just balance of interests such as Liberalism, in theory at any rate, assumed. Neither do they guarantee the inevitable development of a social order in which class conflicts will disappear, as Marx prophesied.

Yet these old beliefs contain a conviction we cannot afford to discard in our search for a path out of the catastrophes of the 20th century. The representatives of these theories

assumed, often naively and indeed without perceiving the contradiction between their assumption and their otherwise materialist philosophy, that men can distinguish between progressive and retrogressive social developments. They took it for granted that development may tend towards better or worse social relationships, and that this "better" or "worse" is not measured by a standard reflecting the interests of any particular social class but is an objective valuation relating to society as a whole. That is, they assumed the existence of a criterion of value applicable to society.

When these hopes of inevitable progress were wrecked, many men lost their bearings. As experience taught them that the apparently progressive achievements of science, technical skill and organising ability tended to increase the powers of destruction, they not only lost hope of inevitable progress but began also to become doubtful or cynical about the concept of good itself. Peace, justice, human freedom, human dignity appeared to be empty words without relation to reality, at least in the political sphere. Reality meant economic crises and world wars. The tendency of social forces generally does indeed seem to be to increase and extend the danger of these recurring catastrophes. For the trouble does not arise from ignorance of or inability to master the forces of nature, so that progress and better technique might be expected to overcome it, but from the constant conflict between various sectional interests. What can the individual do but seek to save at least his own skin? Each for himself!

Against such an attitude of fatalism stands the protest of Benes and others, the recognition that the problem is moral and political, the problem of placing control of the achievements of science and organisation in the hands of good men.

Everybody who thus demands the reassertion of ethical convictions, the raising of our moral standards, is contributing to the revival of the concept of the good. But we must go further. We must clarify the concept in the light of the discovery that it is a fallacy to believe that society is inevitably evolving towards the good. Does the fact that we reject the inevitability of an upward development compel us to abandon

all the elements in the theory ? Does not the concept of the good itself, as implicit in this theory, provide a fruitful approach to a solution of our difficulty ?

CHAPTER II

EMPIRICAL ETHICS

THE SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH TO ETHICS

MODERN attempts to link up politics with ethical convictions and moral forces can roughly be divided into two groups, according to their basic assumptions

In the one group are those which maintain that the forces on which we can rely must be sought in the capacities of human nature and in the field of social relations. Representatives of this way of thinking draw one conclusion from the disappointments of the past that progress is not ensured by a natural harmony of forces. They recognise that men by their own efforts must prevent the misuse of the achievements of civilisation, must solve class conflicts and render impossible the catastrophes of war and economic crisis. And it is to the ethical and moral convictions of man himself that they look to inspire and direct the necessary human efforts.

The representatives of the second group have no such confidence in human nature. The fact that the old hopes have proved illusory has confirmed them in their belief that human nature is too weak to secure the triumph of the good. They warn us against putting our trust in human strength and bid us seek allies in the forces and values of a supernatural world.

Let us examine these two attitudes more closely.

With regard to the first it is obviously reasonable to seek among the natural forces shaping social life those capable of overcoming the social catastrophes. This is indeed a primary task for the politician if he wants to influence social conditions

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in accordance with his political aim. He must be a realist and study existing conditions and the working of social forces ; he must seek out and strengthen the trends moving in the direction of his goal and eliminate, as far as possible, those tending in an opposite direction. For him to rely on supernatural forces to accomplish what is his own task is equivalent to relinquishing the task, for we only tackle a job in earnest when we depend on ourselves and our own powers.

A typical example of the search for a solution on these lines is the "Excursus on Social Morality" by G. D. H. Cole in his book *Europe, Russia and the Future* (Victor Gollancz, 1941). Cole's argument springs from his conviction that in the absence of a pre-established harmony of interests and social forces, man will work for the betterment of social conditions from his consciousness of moral duty. But wherein lies "betterment" ? What is this sense of "duty," what is the "morally good" ? Cole replies. That which is morally good changes in the course of time. It develops together with and because of the development of scientific knowledge, which is a continual process of widening and deepening our conceptions of the workings of nature. This does not mean that we entirely discard our old ideas and replace them by new ones, but with growing experience we become aware that our conceptions of what happens in nature are only approximate, and that we must re-define and supplement them in the light of new discoveries, without giving up the kernel of truth in the older ideas.

Cole argues that social morality develops in a similar way, through growth of experience. The circle within which moral obligations are felt and recognised gradually expands.

"Moral values . . . continue, at any rate within any developing civilisation, to accumulate fuller and deeper meanings."

"The realm of morality has no fixed limits. In any advanced community many issues are moral issues to some people and not to others. Hunting animals for sport is an obvious example and eating them is another."

" . . . it becomes immoral . . . to cause unnecessary

pain to living creatures "

But there are obstacles to this process of development ^{and} these destroy the hope that the growth of moral forces must inevitably lead to the overcoming of class conflict and to social progress. These obstacles come partly from a "reluctance to accept changes," whether this results from inertia, selfishness, or fear of the unknown and partly from the artificial moral taboos imposed and maintained by a ruling class. These latter are the most dangerous. They stifle healthy development and lead to a "false morality," authoritarian and static, which the ruling classes temporarily uphold. Then, when doubts arise and criticism gains ground, this "false morality" collapses. "True morality" is distinguished from "false" by its capacity for adaptation to changing conditions, for growth leading to increasing recognition of the interests and needs of others.

LIMITS OF THE SOCIOLOGICAL METHOD

The determination of the author to be realistic, to confine himself to facts, is undoubtedly sound. By sticking to experience and sociological research he seeks to discover the nature of the moral sense. Much of his arguments is convincing. In the development of individuals and of society there is just such a growth and extension of the sense of responsibility as Cole describes. Men are increasingly aware that they ought to consider the interests of others besides their own. It is also true that this development is not only hindered by the inertia or selfishness of individuals but is frustrated by social institutions which serve the interests of a privileged section. The result is that the moral standards of a nation either become fixed in a traditional static pattern or are lost in vague, emotional reactions or scepticism.

But do these sociological discoveries help us to answer the question: how can we overcome the social catastrophes of the present day, which have destroyed the old confidence in the natural harmony of interests? Cole clearly expects that moral convictions will lead men to oppose the abuse of the

achievements of civilisation. The importance of this investigation lies in the evidence it supplies that such convictions are alive in every society not completely fossilised, and that they function as a progressive force in as far as they are not perverted or crippled by the inertia and cowardice of the human heart, and by the class character of modern society.

The limitation "in as far as they are not perverted or crippled" is, however, certainly a warning. The forces opposing the effective development of moral convictions have recently shown themselves so strong that these convictions have had no appreciable political power to prevent the onrush of economic crises, fascism and war. How can we counter these forces of destruction which themselves actively contribute to the breaking down of man's moral power of resistance?

Cole gives no clear answer to this question. Nor does he expressly pose it. Perhaps he is content with the assurance that in almost every society there are men whose moral standards are in advance of their time. The individual and social obstacles referred to are not indeed insuperable. Some people, by their criticism of existing social relationships and their political demands, attack social privileges sanctioned under the prevailing moral code.

But against the hope that such individuals will be a source of such inspiration and strength as to lead to fundamental change in social relationships stands the obstinate fact that the forces of destruction, chaos and demoralisation have gained the upper hand, at any rate in our day. The question we have to ask is whether we can change the balance of those forces.

Does Cole's investigation help us here? The evidence he gives that the development of moral convictions is to a certain degree frustrated by opposing forces seems to suggest the need to eliminate these forces. How can it be done? These opposing forces are the class institutions of society and certain weaknesses in human nature. To remove the first we must destroy the class character of society, that is, we must make the very political change for which we first require to

strengthen moral convictions. The only course open to us, therefore, would be to help those who have kept themselves comparatively free of social prejudices to overcome their inhibitions arising from inertia, cowardice and selfishness. The question then arises. How can these people be induced to struggle against their own selfishness and weakness?

Cole merely says that this effort has to be made in order to gain better, more dependable forces for political progress. But such an appeal will meet with response only from those who accept the purpose of political progress and rate it above personal ease and security. Since there is no natural harmony between social progress and the personal interests of those who struggle for it, determination to join in the struggle can only spring from live moral convictions, in fact from the very convictions which first have to be strengthened by conquering inertia and cowardice. Again we find ourselves arguing in a circle.

This is understandable since Cole confines himself to sociological and psychological research, to the question to what extent are moral convictions active in society to-day and what are the circumstances influencing their content and strength? Such research shows us the forces in nature and society with which we have to reckon, and therefore also the means available for the achievement of our aims, but it does not tell us what aim to choose. The facts elucidated by this investigation cannot provide us with inspiration to choose higher aims, or to struggle harder and be more ready to sacrifice ourselves for a worthy aim. Yet the situation to-day is not that men are confused about means but that there is confusion and irresponsibility in the choice of aims.

Whether an appeal to moral conviction can alter this situation, and if so how, still remains an open question awaiting further investigation. Cole has barred his approach to this problem by equating the morally good with what men deem to be so. Thus for him the question of content is identical with the sociological question. What are the prevailing moral conceptions in a given society and in what direction do they tend to develop? Having established this identity Cole

confines himself to the tested method of examining experience and ignores the more difficult question whether that which men to-day hold to be right and good is really so. This is not a question of facts alone but of values also. It is not simply a question of what is actually happening, what forces are active and in what direction they are tending, but rather of what we think *ought* to happen and what we are to do about it. Only in investigating this question do we discover and clarify our own ethical convictions.

In comparing the development of moral convictions and of the natural sciences Cole might have realised that he was missing the decisive point. The continuous advance of the natural sciences is due to the very fact that investigators have distinguished between what actually happens in nature, and the generally accepted notions and convictions about these happenings. Only by making this distinction can they maintain a critical attitude towards the accepted beliefs of their day, and so advance towards the truth. A similar incentive to clarify and deepen the prevailing moral and cultural conceptions, and thus to strengthen their influence on the social life, can only spring from the critical question whether these prevailing conceptions are right, whether they are closely enough related to the life of society, or whether they ignore or misrepresent certain essential points of view. Once we pose this question we have to go beyond the mere statement and explanation of facts, we have to deal with values. At this point the empirical method fails us.

NATURAL SYMPATHY AND ENLIGHTENED SELF-INTEREST NO SAFEGUARD

Other attempts to treat ethics as a part of natural science go a step further than that of Cole though they too stick to the realm of factual knowledge and avoid the field of values. They tackle the question what are the interests that tend to develop moral conceptions, in genuine, widening correspondence with changing social relationships? Though these investigations confine themselves to the field of factual

knowledge they seem to indicate the means we seek whereby we can mobilise forces against chaos, crises and war. For it might be argued that men have interests tending to develop their moral convictions, just as they have an interest in extending their experience, at any rate in so far as they derive advantage thereby. If so, by appealing to these interests it should be possible to clarify, deepen and strengthen their understanding of moral values, even without tackling the difficult problem of what good is in itself, as distinct from what men in particular circumstances and particular periods have deemed it to be.

What kind of interests could these be? Different answers have been given. The simplest appears to be that an appeal can be made to sympathy and compassion, for these are emotions which lead men to concern themselves with the interests of their fellows. The sight of the joy or sorrow of others may arouse similar feelings in us and give us an interest in seeing their interests satisfied.

But sympathy certainly cannot be an adequate source of the energy required for the struggle against the social chaos of our time. It does not necessarily and permanently link our interests with those of others. In the first place sympathy can only be aroused in so far as the joy or sorrow of others is visible to the eye, and appeals to our emotion. Our sympathy and readiness to stand by those who are suffering injustice is weakened by the actual and emotional distance which separates us from their suffering. Again, emotions become dulled through familiarity with suffering, and are held in check by the conflict between self-interest and the interests of others. If, in order to overcome these obstacles, the intensity and frequency of the appeal were increased it might be effective, though only if the sacrifice required were not too great. Even so, the obstacles of dulled emotions and conflicting interests cannot be permanently overcome in this way. We have to look for some more reliable motive.

Is it possible, as is sometimes argued, for this force to develop out of the accumulation of experiences of the generations since the earliest communities were formed,

experiences which have taught the mutual dependence of men and the consequent interest of each in doing as he would be done by ? Without making a detailed analysis of the various theories which look to such experience and interests to explain the growth of moral convictions, theories which vary in form according to the social outlook of their representatives, we find in all a common underlying assumption. It is that men have an interest in orderly intercourse with one another, *i.e.* in "law and order," by which, of course, everybody means a law and order within which his own interests are allowed as much free play as possible. Without law and order it would be futile to plan any course of action. Such action is almost always bound to affect the interests of others, and in the possible conflict these may nullify the intentions of the planner. Rather than allow a struggle for power to ensue on each occasion, reducing society to a state of chronic chaos, men find it better to seek a *modus vivendi*, to establish the field of rights and duties for all, to secure to each his rights and hold him to his duties. The idea that social intercourse should be regulated in this way, that everyone should respect the rules, and that if he does not the power of the State should compel him to conform to them, appears to guarantee a society in which each will be able to pursue his aims without the interference of unpredictable happenings.

We need not at this point consider how these theories attempt to explain the development of moral convictions, which imply higher standards than the advantage of the individual, out of considerations of expediency alone. There still remains the question whether this common interest in law and order is strong enough to ensure that rights and duties will be respected by all, and the laws of the land obeyed. Admittedly, our readiness to accept our duties and obey the law is largely due to the existence of this common interest. If we want to enjoy the advantages of an orderly society we cannot completely ignore the demands it makes on us, especially where others are concerned on whom we are dependent for the achievement of our aims. Thus the average man everywhere fits himself into society, obeys the

traffic regulations, pays his taxes and keeps to the law of the land. He does this, not only because otherwise he would be punished, but because in spite of his criticism of one thing or another, in spite of occasional limited protests, he accepts the system, and knows he will get along best if he avoids conflict with it.

The peace of the world and human progress, however, cannot be entrusted to such considerations of mere expediency. To rely on them or to appeal to them is utterly absurd in the light of recent happenings. A classical example is Norman Angell's book, *The Great Illusion*, published in 1911. The author argued that in modern conditions war is no less a calamity for the victor than for the vanquished, war is no longer profitable, therefore it will disappear. History has given the answer to this "illusion." The argument overlooked the fact that though war brings misery to the common people everywhere it may be very profitable to certain sections of society. The armaments industry thrives on war. The big landowners in Germany lived by a tariff system which brought untold hardship to a majority of the people, and would never have been tolerated without the excuse of the danger of war. The imperialistic lust for power can only be satisfied by war, and those who have this craving are ready to risk their own fate and that of all mankind to get their way.

Admittedly such men are few compared with the number who suffer from their unscrupulous activities. A German industrialist once estimated there were only a few hundred of them. It is an old problem why the greater part of society puts up with these monsters instead of uniting to overthrow them. Cannot the interest of each individual in a stable and ordered society be mobilised for such an obviously beneficial purpose? To believe this would again be to fall into illusion. Hitler's strategy, like that of all power politicians, was always to play off his opponents one against the other, both within his own country and outside it. Divide and rule! The success of this ancient strategy shows that the average man is content to take the line of least resistance, to adapt him-

self to familiar facts even though they be unpleasant, rather than to jeopardise his safety for the sake of mankind by taking the dangerous path of protest and struggle against the powerful few

There are many other theories that seek to establish man's interest in the development of moral behaviour and convictions, they owe their origin to modern psychological research. It has been shown that human instincts and interests, when not distorted or repressed, develop more and more in the direction of a conscious guidance of the psychological behaviour. In the course of this development man learns to co-ordinate his impulses into a conception of what is worth striving for beyond the moment. He becomes accustomed to restraining his desires and to considering whether he will satisfy them or not, according as they harmonise with his other interests and his scale of values. Where this development is not free, but hampered by difficulties with which the adolescent cannot cope, illnesses develop which cripple the full unfolding of his energies and capacities. Such illnesses and frustrations appear as self-centredness, as phobias, as destructive impulses, as a hunger for appreciation born of inner insecurity. A healthy life, it is argued, requires that men should share in the life of others, should set themselves an ideal aim for which they will struggle and, if need be, make sacrifices.

Here we find an old conception in a new form, the belief that what is bad in society can be explained as a kind of sickness, and that to cure this sickness it is necessary only to appeal to the natural interest of every man in the healthy development of his personality. By pointing to this interest, the satisfaction of which involves taking a positive attitude to society, this school of thought believes it has avoided the objection to reliance on mere self-interest.

In fact, this explanation does not take us a step further, it repeats the old mistakes. We cannot take it for granted that men regard the healthy, many-sided development of personality as their paramount interest, so that they need only be shown what is necessary for health and they will

do it This is true no more of mental than of physical health. In neither case is there any law of nature to prevent a man endangering his health by carelessness or lack of self-control. Moreover, even a healthily developed personality is not necessarily associated with an adequate sense of duty. The claims of duty may indeed interfere with the harmonious development of his own personality. Those who make the latter their prime consideration will certainly not be fitted to play their part in the present struggle for justice and peace. In other words, an interest in the development of personality does not necessarily lead to the development of moral strength, which alone can end the abuse of man's achievements and capacities.

THE DILEMMA OF EMPIRICAL ETHICS

We have come to a strange result. The old illusion of inevitable progress enters, in one way or another, into all the theories we have examined. Even though the illusion is described as false or misleading in most of them, it appears in a new guise apparently supported by facts taken from experience. What is the reason for this recurring illusion?

Let us state again the problem these theories seek to solve. The experiences of our day have shown that the subjective factor plays a more important part in the life of society than was recognised in the 19th century, neither economic nor any other social factor gives us any guarantee of social progress, even in the long run, whether progressive or reactionary ideas win the upper hand in any period depends upon what men decide is worth struggling for. The question then arises: how can the human will be moved to fight for and to establish just and peaceful social conditions? Moral convictions are looked to as the required spur to the human will, and therefore the investigations of sociologists and psychologists are directed towards testing and establishing this claim. The forces acting on the will are examined with a view to answering the question whether man's interest in peace, justice and social progress is, or is becoming, strong

enough to overcome the opposing interests. Only if this last question can be answered in the affirmative can we regard these investigations as indicating the way forward out of the catastrophes of our day. But it cannot be so answered. No law of nature ensures victory to the good, in this case to the forces favourable to progress. The old belief in inevitable progress has been destroyed by experience. This is admitted. And yet the moral forces, combined with considerations of expediency, are now substituted and regarded as a guarantee of progress. There is a contradiction here. It leads us again to the old optimistic faith which the newer theories claim to have superseded.

Wherein lies the error? Certainly not in examining man's experiences to learn more about the development of moral conceptions. Any unprejudiced person who sets himself the task of examining experience will discover the correctness of many of the observations on which these theories are based. He will be able to trace the rise of moral conceptions in the early, simple forms of communal life and see how they develop hand in hand with the changing forms of social life and custom, how they gradually become wider and deeper or harden into a dogmatic code. He will be able to investigate the influence of other interests on this process and will find that consideration for the interests of others, appreciation of the values of peaceful intercourse and desire for a full and varied life, all play a part.

But he will also find that the capacity to develop moral conceptions is only one side of human nature, and not by any means invariably the strongest. Other interests frequently dominate, other impulses or considerations of expediency. A still greater danger lies in the fact that moral conceptions grow gradually out of more or less vague emotional responses and are liable to be influenced by environment. Thus they may become an instrument of reaction. Marx saw clearly that the ideas prevailing in any society are largely those of the ruling class. In short, we find that man's capacity to form moral conceptions determining the aims of his society is no more immune from abuse than any other human capacity.

It may become dormant or be directed away from the real sources of social injustice into other channels. Moreover, it can be exploited in the mobilisation of fanatical devotion to evil political purposes. The appalling extent to which such a mobilisation can be carried through is illustrated in our own day by the influence Hitler gained over a population reduced to despair and ruin by war and economic crisis, especially over the young people, who grew up in a chaotic, distracted world. Hitler's influence was due to his unscrupulous skill in playing on all sides of human nature. His appeal was directed not only to the baser impulses, to sadism, lust for power and self-assertion, but also to the spirit of service and self-sacrifice for the nation, to the desire of youth to fight in the cause of justice. Had it not been for this satanic method of appealing to the generous emotions of young people, Hitler could never have won over large numbers of young Germans for the extravagances of his so-called "dynamic" policy.

We come back to the starting point of our problem. The capacities and achievements of man, which could make life richer and more secure, can be abused and become a curse instead of a blessing. This is true even of the force we hope will lead us out of the crisis, namely man's capacity to develop moral conceptions and to place these above the claims of self-interest and personal satisfaction.

Are we then bound to conclude that in looking to the moral convictions we are again deceiving ourselves and returning to the old illusion of inevitable social progress? If our investigation were simply a matter of re-examining the forces working in society, in the hope of finding, after all, some force that would guarantee inevitable progress, then we should indeed be falling into the old error. Experience, when we appeal to it, shows the unprejudiced investigator that moral convictions, like every other force working in society, have their limitations, and can be repressed or distorted by a stronger counterforce. The result of the interplay of forces depends on circumstances in every period, and from these investigations it is not possible to declare what trend will, in the long run, prevail.

But suggestions such as that made by Benes, that security against the abuse of man's capacities and achievements is not a technical but a moral problem, do not compel us to confine ourselves to the study of experience. The suggestion implies that we need a greater sense of responsibility in dealing with the achievements of science and organisational ability. And this directs our attention to the purposes which these achievements should be made to serve. A sense of responsibility can only be based on a clear, reasoned opinion about these purposes, about what is good, the values that should be realised in society. If we are to turn to ethics to guide us we have to ask ourselves what is the good we must seek, we must not confine ourselves to learning what sociology and psychology show us that men in particular periods have deemed good. We have to consider what contribution we ourselves should make to the realisation in society of that which is good, we must not limit ourselves to what men have done in the past or are doing to-day.

CHAPTER III

CHRISTIAN ETHICS

RELIANCE UPON DIVINE GUIDANCE

CHRISTIAN ethics places in the forefront a thought which empiricists tend to ignore or disregard—that the nature of man and society does not in itself provide a safeguard against the use of social forces to bring death and destruction rather than a more abundant life. In discussing the appeal to ethics made by the empiricists, Christian thinkers show clearly this orientation of thought.

J. Middleton Murry, for instance, in his book *The Defence of Democracy* (Jonathan Cape, 1929), discusses the political and social problems of our day in the light of a critical appreciation of the Marxist standpoint. He himself has much in common with the Marxist approach though he is a Christian. He does not reject Marx's criticisms of religion and the Churches. He recognises the validity of the reproach that in the period of early Capitalism and the rise of a new ruling class, the majority of the Church leaders supported that class and formed one of the main instruments by which its ideas became the prevailing ideas in society.

Murry also largely agrees with the Marxian analysis of society, though his interpretation would be indignantly rejected by most Marxists, and would probably have been repudiated by Marx himself. He accepts the argument of Marx that the life of society follows a law of development leading it to ever higher forms. Man takes part in this development though he has not planned it and cannot frustrate it.

Yet he is not merely a passive agent, drawn in by some superior power. He actively assists and co-operates. The incentive is either that men suffer so acutely under social conditions that they are driven to struggle against them for survival or that, as students of society, they gain insight into the process of social change and seek to strengthen the progressive forces, determined not only to explain the world but to change it, in accordance with its own laws of development.

This attitude of the student of society to place himself on the side of the oppressed and identify himself with their struggle is, in Murry's view, the consequence of a religious and ethical interpretation of history, as he himself accepts it. For religion, to Murry, is the recognition of a "divine pattern" in human history, and the ethical attitude would be that of a man who fitted himself into this pattern.

In the later development of Marxist teaching, especially in what he calls Marx-Leninism, Murry sees a falsification of Marx's earlier view of history, the basically religio-ethical approach is abandoned and replaced by a materialist outlook. This has come about, he argues, through concentration on the economic forces, alleged to be the only agencies in the historical process. It does not matter in this connection that the materialist outlook is more deeply rooted in the teaching of Marx than Murry believes. For our purpose it is more important to see how far Murry agrees with Marx's interpretation of history, and where he departs from it. He denounces as a fallacy the Marxian prediction that the workers will inevitably be driven to revolt by the action and interaction of the natural, economic forces. Since the revolt of the workers is not inevitable there remains only the second part of the prophecy—that men anxiously acknowledge the divine pattern revealed in history and fit themselves into it. This, in Murry's view, gives the Marxist interpretation of history that special religious character which is clearly reflected in its political and economic conclusions. In seeking to fit himself into the divine pattern, man definitely goes beyond the sphere of decisions towards which his own interests would have directed him. Thus, argues Murry, he has to grow beyond himself, and the

strength to do so cannot come from within, but has to be gained from his understanding of a divine pattern greater than himself

In the Christian contribution to the discussion of politics and social problems, we always meet the conception that human society can only advance towards the good if men fit themselves into the divine pattern by obeying God's will. Thus, the late Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr William Temple, wrote in his booklet, *Christianity and Social Order* (Penguin, 1942) that standards of social life determined by men according to their individual aims and powers are insufficient to overcome the catastrophes of our day because every effort based on human strength alone is subject to the curse of original sin. Original sin, according to Dr Temple, is the centring of Man's desires and valuations on himself

"Our standard of value is the way things affect ourselves. So each of us takes his place in the centre of his own world. But I am not the centre of the world or the standard of reference as between good and bad, I am not, and God is. In other words, from the beginning I put myself in God's place. This is my original sin."

And again.

"Education may make my self-centredness less disastrous by widening my horizon of interest while leaving me still the centre and standard of reference. Education may do more than this if it succeeds in winning me into devotion to truth or to beauty, that devotion may win a partial deliverance from self-centredness. But complete deliverance can be effected only by the winning of my whole heart's devotion, the total allegiance of my will—and this only the Divine Love disclosed by Christ in His Life and Death can do."

Man's aim must be to obey the laws of God. All other aims are influenced by man's subjective convictions and interests. According to this teaching, the understanding of God's will and the readiness to obey His commandments is not only the guide but the source of the power that enables people to resist the forces making for destruction

This Christian ethic definitely rejects the illusion that the interaction of the natural forces in society is sufficient in itself to bring about the good. Moreover, with regard to good and evil it holds firmly to a standard of reference without attempting to derive this standard merely from the course of events. There is no mistaking the fact that men may hold certain things to be good, or at any rate permissible, which do not merit being so regarded, and that therefore constant watchfulness over ourselves and our social environment is needed.

Instead of looking to experience, to sociology, psychology or economics, the Christian ethic relies on a supernatural ordering of events, a divine plan for mankind, with which man can and shall comply in obedience to the laws of God. But this involves giving up the realist attitude rightly adopted by the empiricists, who look to the world of experience to guide them in choosing their goal, and who rely only on the forces they find active in the world of experience. The politician who takes the Christian ethic as his guide has to rely on a supernatural world he *believes* to exist, not on the world of nature he knows from experience, and in which he has to act.

A realistic and progressive policy which takes account of the changing conditions and social relationships within a given society must be related to the world of experience. Neither in determining the long-term goal nor in choosing immediate means towards its achievement can the world of experience be disregarded. Only by basing himself firmly on experience can the politician ensure that his immediate plans will serve to bring about a better order, and not merely to create new power positions which will but aggravate the conflict between individuals or classes or nations. Moreover, only experience will help him to decide how far the forces available can be mobilised to solve the tasks on hand.

Thus there is an unbridgeable gap between the effort to solve our problems by using knowledge gained from experience and the assumption that it is by trusting obedience to divine

revelation that man would best serve God's plans, and in his turn receive the support of supernatural divine forces

Few Christians, however, who are serious about their faith in an Almighty God, accept without reservation their responsibility for carrying out the divine plan. Karl Barth, in *A Letter to Great Britain from Switzerland* (written in 1940¹) bases his political attitude on the Christian faith. Yet he writes

“It cannot be our job to fight God's battle against His enemies, since that battle has already been fought and won on the cross of Golgotha. And further . . . it will become clear to us that it is not up to us to defend or extend the Kingdom of God by this war since the Kingdom will come of itself in Jesus Christ, when His hour comes, without our assistance, political or otherwise . . . A further practical consequence . . . it is not necessary for us or for others to busy ourselves about plans and pictures of the economic and social, national and international, and, lastly, religious conditions in the new order which must be established after this war. We shall not set our hearts on such ‘peace aims’. There is no reason why we should not dream about such ‘peace aims’ as occasion offers. But we shall always remember that we cannot do more than dream about these things.”

In its own way this is logical. The religious faith that history is shaped by the will of God cannot lead men to set themselves clear and compelling ethico-political aims. Barth's conclusions show where the attempt to base ethics and politics on a Christian religious conception will logically take us. It involves renunciation of our ethical task. It leads to a shameful indolence regarding the fight for peace and a better social order. Barth is not entirely consistent, for he declared it to be the duty of Christians to support the war against Hitler as their contribution towards winning God's battle, a battle which he said was already won.

CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND CHRISTIAN POLITICS

Other writers on Christian ethics and a political policy based on Christian principles go further than Barth Middleton Murry and Wilham Temple, in the books to which reference has been made, demand of themselves and their fellow-believers decisions on the questions facing society to-day But how do they bridge the gulf between the natural world with its conflict of finite forces and the plans of an Almighty God, who cannot possibly be dependent upon the assistance of his finite creatures ?

The gulf is clearly revealed in the conclusions drawn by Temple He distinguishes sharply between the Christian social principles, which all Christians must accept, and the particular criticisms and reforms of existing social institutions by individual Christians like himself He maintains that the formulation of social and political programmes is not part of Church teaching and the Christian faith The Churches cannot bind themselves to follow any particular political policy There is no Christian ideal of society An attempt to depict and set up a fixed Ideal State would end in sterile doctrinairism for it would bear no relation to changing conditions Christianity has a more valuable service to render than drawing ideal pictures It sets forth certain principles with reference to which we can judge social relationships, and which should be our guide in making decisions But the detailed application of these principles requires a technical knowledge and skill which belong entirely to the natural world It is therefore not the task of the Churches, whose work lies in teaching the doctrines and ethical principles of the Christian faith The Churches must leave the application of these principles to those who have the necessary special knowledge, and must therefore refrain from drawing up political programmes Their influence on public life is confined to training their members in a sense of moral responsibility according to the Christian meaning of the words, and to calling on men to interpret their rights and duties as citizens in the light of the Christian teaching

It is true that social and political patterns fixed in every detail, prescribing once and for all how social and human relationships should be organised, must necessarily degenerate into a distorted picture of the fundamental idea as they do not take account of changing conditions. Dr. Temple is right. We have to give up the idea of such an unalterable pattern and look for some principles of a more general nature. Such principles would not point to concrete demands unless applied to given circumstances. This means that the demands made in any particular case will vary according to existing social conditions, and different circumstances will require different measures to deal with them. To find out what is required in any particular case we need more than principles, we have to investigate existing social conditions and know the dominant forces, and this knowledge we cannot get from ethical principles but from experience.

So far so good. Does it imply that the Churches, which claim to teach mankind the basic ethical principles, can and ought to refrain from determining how those principles should be applied in any given set of circumstances? Does it follow that because the Christian doctrine does not suffice for this purpose, the application of Christian principles must be left to the decision of those experts who have the required knowledge of social and political conditions? Surely Churches which claim to teach the principles by which men must judge and influence the social order cannot disclaim responsibility for acquiring the knowledge which will enable them to understand the practical consequences of their teaching.

The Roman Catholic Church has gone furthest towards codifying such consequences, for instance in the papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, which contains Leo XIII's guiding principles for a social policy on Roman Catholic lines. These attempts, however, are far from setting a clear political line which would be binding on every member of the Church. The Church does not even go to the trouble of holding the official exponents of its doctrine—the clergy—to a universal and unequivocal political attitude. Far from it, it has even benefited from the inclusion in its ranks of men adhering to

most contradictory political opinions.

Here we are faced with an unavoidable alternative · either the principles taught by the Churches are so definite and unambiguous as to entail the raising of certain social and political demands wherever they are applied to given social conditions, or they are not so definite. If they are, to adopt these principles means to accept the task of always applying them to given circumstances, seeking what they require of us and making sure it is carried out. No Church can expect to be taken seriously unless on the basis of its teachings it lays down the unavoidable social consequences for any given set of conditions. The Church, teaching these principles, cannot confine itself to communicating them to its members and urging them to live accordingly.

But if Church teaching is not so definite, it cannot be a standard of reference to which men turn for guidance in any and every situation, as Temple claims. Here we must anticipate a misunderstanding often encountered. To deny the ability of the Churches to provide such a standard is not to deny the sincerity and depth of the religious ideas underlying such teaching. It is to deny the possibility of basing ethical and political convictions on religious principles. If we want an ethical foundation for our political judgments and decisions it is to another sphere of values that we must look.

THE DANGERS OF POLITICAL CHRISTIANITY

Those who approach the problems facing society to-day from the standpoint of Christian ethics cannot escape this alternative · either they must stand for a political Christianity or they must look elsewhere for guidance in forming their political judgments. Yet there is hardly a single leading representative of the Christian ethical teaching who accepts either alternative unreservedly.

In course of time the claims of a political Christianity have become to a great extent discredited. Rightly so, for they led logically to the State's acting as the secular arm of the Church, thus recognising the divinely inspired Church as the

supreme authority on political matters. Wherever this claim is made the guiding principle of political action—as it was, for instance, by mediaeval Catholicism or by Calvin's Church State—man's freedom to use his own understanding in shaping his own life and contributing to shaping the life of society is virtually curtailed. As the political trustees of the divine purpose—so inaccessible to man's enquiring mind—the Churches cannot but refer to divine revelation which has to be explained and applied by the Churches and their appointed officers.

This claim of political Christianity would keep mankind perpetually in leading-strings. It has long been rejected by progressive people. In its earlier extreme form it is hardly put forward to-day, at any rate not openly. But the Christian Churches have certainly not refrained from exercising political influence. The Vatican, in particular, continues to be an important factor in power politics. The policy pursued by the official head of the Catholic Church in recent years has helped to nourish the mistrust of Christian influence in politics. From the rise of Fascism onwards, the Vatican has made concordats with Mussolini and Hitler, taken sides in the Spanish civil war against the progressive forces, supported the men who betrayed France to Hitler. The Vatican has a sorry record of pacts made with the forces that have subjected men to slavery. Even the opposition to National Socialism by the Catholic and Protestant Churches in Germany, despite the courage, self-sacrifice and idealism of individuals, bears traces of these shady political connections. The resistance of these Churches did not begin until they themselves were attacked, and even then was confined to the defence of their own interests. Only in a few cases did local Churchmen protest against the persecution of Jews and Socialists in the Third Reich. Pastor Niemöller, the martyr of the Confessional Church, closes his book *Vom U Boot zur Kanzel** with expressions of gratitude "for the tremendous work of national uplift and unification which has begun

* An English translation appeared in 1936. *From U-Boat to Pulpit* (publisher Hodge)

amongst us." That book was written in 1934, that is *after* the burning of the Reichstag and the setting up of concentration camps

Another example is that of the Archbishop of Muenster, von Gahlen, who during the present war had the courage to protest from the pulpit against Nāzi methods, but he concentrated on reproaching the Nazis for having expropriated Church funds and Church organisations and for having raised unfounded allegations against priests, monks and nuns whom they had arrested and imprisoned, and otherwise prevented from carrying out their religious duties

Experiences of this kind have led many thoughtful Christians to conclude that the Churches should refrain from active participation in political affairs lest they be tempted to strive for political power. In their view the Churches stand for the Kingdom of God, whose realm is not of this world. Therefore they should not attempt to define a Christian policy for the conduct of worldly affairs. Such considerations may explain why Temple, Murry and many others regard the work of the Church as limited to the proclaiming of the divine message and the teaching of Christian ethics, the attempt to foster the spiritual side of human nature and to influence people to interpret in the light of Christian teaching their rights and duties as citizens

Yet they are far from drawing the conclusion which follows from the decisive rejection of these political claims. This conclusion would be that reference to God's will does not provide dependable political principles which are clear and unambiguous. To be dependable such principles have to be accessible to man's reason and criticism. If they are to be found at all, it can only be by way of an immediate ethical conviction related to the kind of social life we know from experience

CHAPTER IV

ETHICAL REALISM

CAUSALITY AND PURPOSEFUL ACTION

WE have seen that two things have constantly to be kept in mind. Both schools of thought we have dealt with in the previous pages acknowledge one of them but ignore the other. Firstly, we must be careful to maintain a secure footing in the realm of experience. We cannot borrow our criterion of the good, our standard of reference in making political judgments and determining our aim, from a supernatural reality, allegedly more perfect and higher than that which we know in the realm of experience. Nor can we mobilise in the service of our aim any other than the natural forces we know from experience, shaping the life of society. Secondly, we must break with the old illusion that these natural forces, of themselves, will lead to the good. We do not make this belief less illusory simply by including ethical convictions in the sum of the active social forces. Certainly these convictions are among the social forces, but no law of nature guarantees that they cannot be overpowered by counter-forces or, worse still, distorted or abused.

It is not surprising that the two attempts to relate ethics and politics so far examined do not escape one or the other of these pitfalls. For how are both to be avoided? The refusal to seek among the social forces, known to experience, for a guarantee that the good will automatically be brought about, apparently only leaves the way open to look elsewhere for support, and to seek there a criterion of the good. On the

other hand, if we realistically confine ourselves to the realm of experience, what is to be the basis of our confidence that human society can advance out of the cycle of crises and wars if not the hope that the social forces and powers of nature might be favourable to such progress ?

We cannot avoid the dilemma so long as we look at the world of experience solely with the eyes of the natural scientist, studying the laws of cause and effect in the sequence of events. Certainly, in itself, this scientific method is sound and can be applied in all fields of experience. It is indispensable in shaping social relationships. To do this we need soberly to evaluate the sociological, psychological, economic and technical factors with which we are confronted. Yet the most competent computation on these lines carries with it no guarantee that we shall achieve our aim. What it does is to show the energetic and determined man where his opportunities lie. All then depends on whether there is such energy and determination available, and if so whether they are used to secure peace, justice and liberty, or alternatively are devoted to personal or sectional ends to which the good of mankind is sacrificed.

We can, of course, approach this question too by studying cause and effect in the interaction of the social forces. But such an investigation only *interprets* the crisis of our time, and in certain circumstances may actually impede the task of ending the crisis and of *changing* the world. If we could do no more than make this kind of analysis, any attempt to look to ethics as a guide out of the chaos of our day would be hopeless from the start.

Certain modern scientific theories, especially those concerned with society, do in fact incline to recognise only this one approach, and regard any other as utopian or unscientific. Yet nobody accepts this attitude in daily life. Carried to its logical conclusion it would make us regard all that happens through or to us as part of a mechanical process in which truth and error, anarchy and order, the creation and destruction of values, are left to the chance disposition of forces. However such an attitude of fatalism may be defended in

theory, it breaks down whenever we take considered action even in the smallest matters

In taking considered action we behave in a way which we deem good, and we deliberately try to avoid making mistakes. We are acting on the assumption that what we strive for is not a matter of mere chance. What we consider is whether the opinions and decisions before us deserve preference. We consider whether there are reasons for us to assume that these opinions are right, and that these decisions will serve our purpose. Such reasons may, of course, be based on either emotional or more or less clearly thought-out notions.

Thus the fact that we are able to control our thoughts and deeds reveals a connection between events other than the one of cause and effect. Our ability to base thought and action on certain grounds makes it possible for us to avoid mistakes, discover truth and create values, and thus escape being at the mercy of chance. There is no causal connection between events whereby without fail truth comes to light and that which is good is achieved. But the thinking, reasoning human being can work systematically to discover truth and bring about what he conceives to be good.

Admittedly this relationship to the true and good, basic to a well-considered decision, is rarely found in a clear, unmistakable form. Human thinking struggles with the temptation to take short cuts, and it indulges in prejudice or escapism, and thus decisions may often be to a greater or less extent the outcome of wishful thinking. Moreover, the rational choice of ends and means is mixed with emotional reactions to environmental influences, so that even where a particular aim is firmly upheld in face of opposition, it is not necessarily an aim that has been thoroughly considered. We can only speak of a well-considered aim where thought has been given to the question whether it is worthy of the effort and sacrifice required to achieve it, and is not dictated by selfish desire, greed or fanatical superstition. Knowledge and error, consideration and greed or selfishness exist side by side, and this accounts for the fact that the achievements of science, technology and organisation often become instruments of

destruction, and that wars and crises attain a magnitude more terrible than any catastrophes in Nature.

In face of these experiences we are too apt to ignore our capacity to reason, our capacity to escape from blind chance by considering whether we are thinking rightly and acting wisely. So it is understandable that in our attempts to find a way out of the social catastrophes of our day, we fall back again and again on analyses of existing social forces in the vague hope that, by their interaction, evil will in the long run be overcome, or else we cling to a religious faith that a more perfect, purer will than that of man is guiding the course of history, and that in submission to this lies our hope of deliverance.

But experience teaches us that the interaction of the natural forces in society is not determined by standards of value. The stronger force prevails, and whether under given circumstances values are created, maintained or destroyed is a matter of chance. This does not alter the fact that man has the capacity to seek truth and wisdom, in other words, to refer his decisions to standards of value. The capacity is there, but whether and to what extent it is used to decide which of his desires and plans are worthy of pursuit is not determined by any law of nature, its use can only be developed by the considered decision of men and women conscious of their responsibility.

Thus there is only one way out of the chaos of our day - we must grasp the fact that man is able to take such considered decisions, and we must see to it that such decisions are taken, and that political influence is secured for those who take them.

This brings us to the point where we can see what ethics has to contribute to the shaping of an enlightened and realistic policy. We need well-considered decisions as to the ends worth striving for in the social relationships within and between nations as to how progress or retrogression in the development of these relationships can be measured, and as to the criteria by which politicians, conscious of their responsibility, are to judge their conduct of affairs.

The question is not what do some individuals or what do the majority consider good ? The question is, what is the criterion of what is good for society ? This is the distinction between the real ethical problems and the empirical questions investigated by those whose concern is only to discover the forces that have prevailed in changing social conditions. The empiricists' claim that their method fulfils the demand of realism is not valid, for they ignore an essential factor in the world of experience. The truth is that we do not judge natural events only by the gauge of cause and effect, but measure them with standards of value and, to however limited an extent, try to achieve something in accordance with these standards. The task of ethics is to clarify and ratify the standards which in practice we act upon. It must be remembered, however, that though they prompt action, they by no means automatically and openly govern it. Unless they are clarified, they remain clouded by error or egotism or, more dangerous still, by prejudices fostered by the social order.

Thus in passing from the factual question, what men actually deem good, to the ethical one, what is the good we ought to strive for in the life of society, we are not forsaking the realist attitude. We accept the fact that our political aims must be related to existing social relationships and that the social forces we have to utilise are those known to the world of experience. The value of judgments we have to clarify to find the standards to which they refer is expressed more or less dimly or confusedly in our deliberate actions. The criterion we seek is that to which reason refers when we consider events in nature or society and try to influence them. We are not bound to look for this criterion in some revelation of a divine will superior to Nature and to man's understanding.

THE PROBLEM OF FREE WILL

Certain fundamental difficulties may be raised to show there can be no such connection between ethics and politics as we here claim is necessary, that the theory of ethics put

forward is itself impracticable, and that an attempt to relate ethics and politics is therefore utopian and bound to fail.

The first difficulty lies in the question whether the two methods of investigation to which we have referred can really be used side by side, or whether one is a contradiction of the other. Is the realist view that the political life of society, like the physical world, is dominated by the stronger force compatible with the conviction that we are capable of influencing political developments in the direction we regard as good ?

Here we come to the old problem of free will. In the political field doubts about free will are expressed in an attitude of fatalism, in the conviction that in the last resort the course of events is determined by great social forces on which the attitude of individuals has very little effect, even where individuals appear to play a part they are only the product and expression of existing social conditions. This view is sound enough in that the natural law of cause and effect can be traced in the political as in other fields. The outbreak of wars and crises, the policies of the Big Powers or of individual politicians or political groups, can be explained by analysing the forces, interests and relationships which have brought about this or that political development. The more thorough the analysis, the more clearly can further developments be foreseen. This possibility of prediction seems to rule out the task of influencing towards the recognised good the direction in which events are moving. It appears to be accidental whether and how far the actual tendencies observed further or frustrate our ethical conceptions of what ought to be. We have seen plainly enough in our own day how this element of chance may defeat the cause of peace, liberty and cultural advance.

It would take us too far afield to go thoroughly into this real difficulty. But we certainly do not get rid of it by taking a fatalist attitude, by limiting ourselves to observation, explanation and prophecy, in fact such an attitude is not even consistent. Close observation will reveal in the very question from which we started the two methods of investigation which

we have found . the one setting out to explain the causal connection and the other valuing and selecting The question itself resulted from the observation that, if they are used for selfish purposes, man's skill and inventiveness can easily become fatal to the great goods of mankind, peace, justice and freedom Wherever man acts with diligence and inventiveness, his may certainly be called a considered action He is confident that he can influence the processes in his own mind and in the external world so as to fit them to his purpose, which is to acquire a clear and well-founded idea of what is happening, and to achieve what he deems to be good. It is true that his purposes may spring from base, unworthy ambitions, in which case he may use his achievements for anti-social ends But it would be wrong to conclude from this possibility of a misuse of his gifts that man is incapable of deliberately choosing and directing his course of action In our struggles against obstacles and opposition, we distinguish clearly between those due to the blind forces of Nature, such as earthquakes and floods, and those which are the work of other wills that deliberately frustrate our plans

Anyone who claims that the law of causality rules out the possibility of man's effective intervention in the political field for the purpose of bringing about what he conceives to be good therewith rejects the question from which we set out, and ignores the facts of experience which thrust this question upon us

Inveterate sceptics try to get out of this difficulty by interpreting all human achievements and their use or misuse exclusively in terms of causal relationships To be consistent, they would have to regard the idea that man is capable of considered action as a mere illusion This idea, they would have to explain, originated, in the course of mankind's evolution, from certain outside influences, and is to-day a factor in the development of modern civilisation, with its technique of war and economic crises It is logically impossible, however, to maintain this attitude of the unconcerned spectator, trying to observe the happenings within human society from outside, without sharing in the conceptions denounced as

illusory , impossible because there is no considered action which does not rest on this very conception For the supporter of such a line of thought must claim that it is reasonable, thus basing his own thesis on the very thing that is denied in the thesis itself the assumption that he has formed his opinion after carefully weighing the pros and cons, and thus safeguarding it against error

For our purpose here there is no need to go into the controversy about the relationship between causality and free will It is enough to point out that in practice man constantly reckons with both causal necessity and free will We cannot, without contradicting ourselves, deny the possibility for man to influence the course of events by considered action We shall therefore take account of this possibility in our further investigations

CLARIFYING AND CONFIRMING ETHICAL CONVICTION

The second difficulty lies in the method we have to use in dealing with ethical questions Here again the two approaches have to be combined Since we have to do with questions of value, the descriptive and explanatory methods of scientific research are not sufficient , on the other hand, when we try to answer these questions of value, as ethics presents them, we have to take account of the world of experience and cannot therefore base our premises on divine revelation or abstract speculation We must begin with those considered actions which we experience in ourselves and others We have seen that in considered action man is guided by a certain notion of values, which leads him to shape arguments and make decisions in a way which to him seems to achieve the desired object Yet we also know from experience that our reasoning varies in depth, that the judgments we draw from it may be warped by prejudice or wishful thinking, and that we are therefore not justified in assuming that they are what an unbiased examination would show to be right

The only way to make such an unbiased examination is to persevere along the path which experience sets us upon In

other words, we must clarify and deepen our at first unreasoning awareness that a certain decision is right in the given circumstances. Passions may interfere with this awareness, habit, temporary or permanent influences of the environment, may deflect it from the direction it would have taken if allowed to develop free and undisturbed. But such disturbances can be overcome, as elsewhere, it is possible to eliminate prejudice from our convictions by thoughtful criticism. For this purpose we have to ask ourselves why in a particular situation we feel a certain course to be right, what are the grounds on which this feeling is based. Reviewing the whole situation we can recollect what factors moved us to recognise or to strive for something or other as a good. Such a review reveals to us the standard used by our own feelings in the particular instance, and enables us to determine whether this standard is one which we would always recognise in any situation whatever the circumstances, or whether our attitude, in this particular case, was due to external pressure or personal prejudice, and that we might have rejected or condemned it had we been detached observers.

This method, by which ethical convictions are clarified and purified, is the method of abstraction. It consists of a thorough examination of actual moral convictions as we experience them, and a search for the standard by which the unbiased feeling for right is guided. Thus it combines the two approaches. It starts from the fact that certain given relations and actions are judged by our feeling. It permits and even requires us to test the standards obtained by applying them to varying circumstances to find out whether they succeed or fail. If they fail it means that they do not, as we were first inclined to assume, pertain everywhere and in all circumstances. On the other hand, this method does not merely register what at present man holds to be good, but faces up to the crucial question whether what we regard as right and good is in truth really so. For the method of abstraction is a matter of freeing the sense of right and wrong, as we spontaneously feel it, from the disturbing influences and inhibitions which arise from the particular circumstances.

of the case, and penetrating to the generally applicable conviction on which it is based.

The attempt to obtain by this method a valid criterion to which the political worker can and should refer requires, admittedly, a confidence shared by few to-day, namely that in the human understanding there is an original moral interest. The method presupposes that there is a standard of right and wrong which we can discover by analysing our own convictions, and which is accessible to all who undertake this investigation with enough care and sincerity. Man's experience up to now admittedly gives little support to this confidence. The existing conflict of views as to what constitutes good and right social relationships, and the prevailing scepticism and relativism, have engendered widespread doubt whether generally applicable answers to ethical questions can be established at all. Here Kant's warning is still apt that one should refrain from "lining up with the mob who vulgarly refer to contradictory experience", in other words, one should beware of quoting past experience to prove that something is unalterable when all that is lacking is a sufficiently earnest attempt to alter it.

It is not proposed to put forward an abstract philosophical argument to prove that our method of analysis, if thoroughly carried out, must of necessity lead to a result of universal application*. Our present task is limited to the experiment of pursuing, by the procedure to which our investigation has led us, that clarification of the ethical convictions without which we cannot hope for a restoration and renewal of political life.

COMBINING RIGHT WITH MIGHT

Before we begin this experiment a few words should be said about the relationship we are trying to establish between politics and ethics.

* Such an investigation has been made by the school of thought called "critical philosophy". It has been carried furthest by Leonard Nelson in his book *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*.

Politics is the art of organising society in accordance with a given purpose. It follows that the politician has to make use of the forces which control the life of society. Consequently political questions always include the question of power. The achievement of a political programme largely, though not entirely, depends on the power of its representatives to overcome the opposition of their political opponents, if need be by forceful coercion. Ethics, as the teaching of what it is good to do and to strive for, appeals to the mind of man, to his readiness and capacity to work for the good without external compulsion.

How then can the art of politics base itself on ethical principles? How can the struggle for power be reconciled with the appeal to reason, how can the use of compulsion be combined with the ideal that men should freely choose that which is right?

The conflict between these two methods has often been regarded as irreconcilable. If this were the case, then we should have to relinquish the very task to which our argument leads, namely the need to shape politics in accordance with ethical standards. For if we reject the claims of ethics in political life we are giving our consent to the forces which to-day are using the very triumphs of civilisation and culture to the detriment of the human race. And, on the other hand, if the claims of ethics lead us to reject the struggle for power in favour of appeals to reason, we are leaving the field to these same forces. Even if we were to rely upon gradually curing the ills of society by means of education, we should be exposing the educational system itself to the mercy of any serious opponent who was not afraid to subject it to force. To try and discount this latter danger by arguing that in time enlightened moral claims will be respected even by these opponents, is simply to revive the old illusion that the forces of the good will inevitably triumph in Nature.

We have already met with this difficulty in discussing the clarification and justification of ethical convictions. We found an apparent contradiction between realism, which studies the actual forces working in Nature and society—without the

illusion that any natural law will ensure the victory of the good—and the ethical conviction that one can choose one's own aims and strive for what one deems right. We also found that the contradiction was only apparent, and that in fact these modes of thought are mutually dependent and, systematically pursued, inevitably lead to each other. We only get into a really contradictory position when, to avoid a contradiction we renounce one or other of the approaches, and refuse either to examine and accept facts as they are, or else to accept the guidance of our sense of values. The would-be realist who will have nothing to do with scales of value fails in consistency whenever he takes considered action. Similarly the would-be idealist who rejects the struggle for power and the use of physical force in order not to risk soiling his hands betrays his own ideals by rejecting the demands they make on him for their realisation.

The way out again lies in a combination of the two views, resulting in what may be called Ethical Realism. Applied to the problems of society this means that, as realists, we may not reject the use of force as a political means, but must be prepared if necessary to use it to attain and defend a more peaceful, free and just social order, and that, as idealists, we may not treat this means of political struggle as an end in itself, but look to ethics to guide our political actions so that the power of society is put at the service of peace, freedom and justice.

We have now to discuss how the guidance of ethics can be obtained and how, by using the method of abstraction, we can acquire a clearer understanding of the demands ethical convictions make on us.

CHAPTER V

THE THEORY OF RIGHT

THE POLITICAL APPROACH TO ETHICS

WE have a definite purpose in trying to clarify our ethical judgments and to trace them back to the underlying convictions in the field of values. We hope in doing so to establish the basis of a policy combining the two attitudes : The realist's sober assessment of the given social relations and forces, and the idealist's tenacious hold upon the political aim he recognises as right and good. This political interest determines the angle from which we approach our task. Ethical questions enter into all sides of life and there are various aspects from which one can begin to study them. We are here concerned with those which arise from the valuation of political conduct.

Two different questions at once arise and require to be clearly distinguished one from the other. Since politics is the art of organising society in accordance with a given purpose, the first question naturally is what that purpose should be. We have to ask what should be secured in the life of society by political means, by what criterion existing social relationships should be judged and political programmes examined as to the validity or urgency of their demands. On the other hand, since the pursuit of this aim can only be ensured if politically active people deliberately make it their own as the consequence of their convictions, the second question is unavoidable. What can induce a person deliberately to make the betterment of social conditions his purpose, and

for its sake to give up wishes and ideals which attract him to different fields of action ?

These two questions, though closely related, direct attention to quite different aspects of value. The second alone is directly concerned with ethical tasks, asking as it does what makes human beings act on moral lines, and concentrate on doing what they recognise to be right without either allowing more tempting goals to deflect them from their purpose, or being deterred by the magnitude of the efforts and sacrifices involved.

The first question, on the other hand, is not concerned with the springs of individual action but with existing social relationships and the extent to which these may be influenced or changed by organised action. It will have to be seen whether among the many possible purposes at which political life might aim, there are some the realisation of which would be valuable in itself, as distinct from merely serving the personal interest of individual politicians or social groups.

Failure to draw a clear line between the two questions may lead us to neglect one in favour of the other. Professor Carr, in his much-quoted book *The Conditions of Peace* (Macmillan, 1942) has described the crisis of our time as a moral one. This has caused him to concentrate mainly on the moral issue. His chief concern is to investigate whether and how the people of our day can be made more inclined to fulfil the duties and make the sacrifices necessary if civilisation is to be saved. Admittedly, without such a growth of moral vigour we cannot expect a renewal of political life. There is the danger, however, of concentrating exclusively on the moral appeal, and so of neglecting the question as to the desirable political aim.

This question about the aim is often evaded by the argument that duty and self-sacrifice have a moral value in themselves, whether or not the aim for which an individual sacrifices himself is a worthy one, and whether he achieves it or is frustrated in his purpose by external obstacles.

Though it is true that error or failure does not lessen the moral value of any otherwise valuable effort, it is equally

true that this moral value is incompatible with indifference or negligence in the fight against error and failure. Unless there is a serious effort to decide what political ends are worthy of our moral efforts, the appeal to morality involved does not deserve to be taken seriously. The seriousness of a man's sense of duty and sacrifice can be tested by finding out whether he really understands what it is his duty to do, what he is to make sacrifices for, and how he can serve these ends with the greatest prospect of success. To fail to realise this is to play into the hands of unscrupulous people like the Nazis who, for their own evil designs, abuse the eagerness of youth to act morally.

On the other hand it is just as fatal a mistake to concentrate on the aim to the point of forgetting the moral appeal. This common error has often been made by people who understood enough about politics to know that social wrongs cannot be righted merely by education and moral exhortation. Peace, freedom and social justice cannot be won merely by preaching to those who hold the key positions of power in society. But, vital as it is to seize these key positions and to prevent their misuse, the very achievement of the task depends on the existence of people who are willing to undertake it. It would be quite unrealistic and utopian to expect their private interests to sustain their will to struggle for such a purpose. An individual's private interests may happen to harmonise with the forces of progress, but social progress cannot be assured unless it is willed by active politicians who, being whole-heartedly determined to put an end to the abuse of power, begin with themselves and see to it that the power they exercise and seek to increase is used to further the cause of justice and liberty.

We must therefore study both these questions. It is appropriate to begin with the one which refers directly to the political aim and concerns the standards by which, with sufficient thought, we can determine the political form of the society for which we should strive.

PEACE, FREEDOM AND JUSTICE AS IDEALS

Policies and plans for post-war reconstruction are widely discussed to-day. We thus have the opportunity to examine the conceptions of society on which such plans are based, and to investigate the standards of value underlying these conceptions.

The first point to bear in mind is that we are dealing with questions of value, not with the investigation of social trends. The fact that the latter is so often given preference is due to the suspicion that the consideration of value tends to lose contact with reality, and so lends itself to the building of castles in the air. It is argued that whatever may be our political programme it has to be carried out in the world known to our experience, so that if we fail to recognise its real forces and relations, and thus to understand the trends of development, we are likely to put forward utopian schemes and create institutions which in the given circumstances may actually impede progress.

This argument is sound. Certainly a realist policy must rest on an adequate knowledge of social forces. But however well equipped with such knowledge a politician may be, he can only use it effectively to the extent that he knows what he is aiming to achieve. And it is not sufficient that his aim should be formulated only in reference to the particular situation and with too great a deference to the established facts. For in that case he has no criterion to guide him in determining how far he can and should go in his effort to change the given conditions.

For this reason we shall not discuss the question of the existing trends in society until we are clear about the criterion by which we should, as politicians, examine the given conditions and formulate our aims. Only when we have done this are we justified in asking how far and in what way we can serve our ideals in the world as it is.

Three main social demands, three main aspirations are put forward to-day. to secure a lasting peace, to make freedom a reality, to establish social justice. No one seriously inter-

ested in social progress will deny that these ideas all express urgent needs. Difficulties arise, however, when we begin to inquire into their meaning and consider the order of priority in which we should place them.

It is understandable that, after two world wars in a generation, many people give priority to the demand for peace. This is certainly legitimate if we are asking what is the first and most urgent task to deal with now, after the war. For there is no sense in any scheme for European reconstruction unless there is an assurance of lasting peace.

But if we ask which of these three ideas is linked with the more comprehensive standard of value, we shall have to place them in a different order. To secure peace is, in itself, only a negative aim. It means that the relations of individuals and nations shall not be determined by sheer power. When a power relationship exists, conflicts and disputes are settled by the stronger enforcing his will on the weaker party, without the value of this purpose being taken into account. Where power prevails in this way, intercourse among individuals and nations is governed merely by the interplay of the various social forces, and whether social progress is advanced or retarded is a matter of chance. It follows that the rule of chance can only be eliminated by the assurance of peace, which is thus the essential condition of the application of any standards of value to the life of society. But just for this reason, the demand for peace does not tell us what standards of value should apply in a society where peace is secured.

Moreover, if we seek peace because it is the condition for the creation of the good and the rational in society, we may not buy it at any price. We have had an object-lesson in the two wars through which we have lived, to show that a pacifist attitude is of no real service to man's yearning for peace. Peace obtained by unresisting submission to dictators is not a preparation for a better social order but, on the contrary, an acquiescence in power relationships. Consequently it is not even an assured peace, for it leads to sharper conflicts and lays the train for a new explosion. There is thus a limit beyond which peace ceases to be an ideal, and that limit is

determined by the other ideals of social life. A stand must be made against those who would subject social life to their arbitrary will. Only when their influence has been eliminated can peace provide the conditions for the construction of a better social order.

INTERDEPENDENCE OF JUSTICE AND FREEDOM

Of the other two demands, to make freedom a reality and to establish equality of rights for all, the first has for many the stronger appeal to-day. The struggle against Nazi tyranny waged by the suppressed peoples of Europe has been a struggle for the freedom of these peoples. Loss of freedom has aroused a greater spirit of resistance than any other deprivation or distress brought about by the war. More than once, even the Nazi terror machine had to give in to this opposition. Hostages have been threatened with death and yet have lived, when it became obvious that their execution would not break up the underground resistance. Strikers have won concessions. The compulsory mobilisation of the workers of the occupied countries for the German war industries was achieved on a less extensive scale than was anticipated. These were victories of the spirit of freedom triumphing over the instruments of despotic power. The struggle brought together men and women from different social classes and different political camps. Conflicting social and political opinions gave way to the unifying idea that to submit to the loss of freedom without a struggle was the worst of evils, even if the prospects of successful resistance seemed as bleak as they did, for instance, in the autumn of 1940.

But the struggle against Hitler had another aspect, which should warn us against over-estimating the importance of the idea of freedom even here. This struggle began very slowly. Hitler and his supporters had time enough to set up their Terror apparatus against the opposition in their own country and to create their war machine for the conquest of Europe, before they encountered any determined opposition. The hesitation of those who were ultimately to become in turn

the victims of the barbarian onslaught cannot be explained as due to ignorance. Everybody knew, or ought to have known, what kind of men the fascists were. Hitler never made a secret of his intention to carry out his plans without regard for anybody's freedom. Mussolini even spoke openly of the "decayed corpse of freedom". Nevertheless both Hitler and Mussolini succeeded for a long time in carrying out their plans because they always assured enough of their potential opponents that they would not interfere in their affairs. In exchange they merely required to be left a free hand to deal with a particular opponent. Thus they themselves insolently appealed to the idea of freedom—and in its name they were given a free field by those who were ready to sacrifice the freedom of others so long as they believed their own was not seriously threatened.

It may be said that this complaisance on the one hand and the pretensions of the dictators on the other are sheer abuses of the original idea of freedom, that the true love of freedom is incompatible with the oppression of others or even with the toleration of such oppression. But how are we to decide whether we are confronted by a case of oppression—in the sense of an arbitrary encroachment on the freedom of another by means of force—or whether a certain curtailment of his freedom is necessary, justifiable and reasonable? We cannot condemn as oppression every restriction of freedom. To demand unlimited freedom for all is a contradiction in terms. In every society all are mutually dependent, one on the other. One man's freedom of action restricts the freedom of others whose interests are affected by his action. We therefore need a standard by which to determine the frontiers between the spheres of freedom of different individuals. This standard does not lie in the idea of freedom itself, but in the third of the ideas to which we referred, the creation of just relations, or in other words the recognition of equal rights for all. We must therefore carefully study this demand, and see exactly what it means. If we neglect or disregard it, even the fight for freedom is in danger of becoming a mere struggle for privileges, and thus of losing its value. This is

not to say, however, that the idea of justice can be separated from that of freedom, or can even be applied without reference to it. As we have seen, the two are closely connected. For while conflicts between the desires of individuals for freedom must be settled justly and not by sheer force, it is equally true that among the demands which justice should guarantee in society is that of respect for human freedom.

In the mutual relation of these two ideas, however, priority must be given to the claims of justice. The effort to attain freedom is restricted by the claims of justice as soon as it clashes with similar efforts of others. In such a conflict the idea of justice rules out the assertion of individual desires regardless of other people's interests, it sets a limit beyond which the defence of one's own freedom has no ethical value. It is of course required of a just solution of conflicts that the value of freedom in human life shall be taken into account. This unequal mutual relation of the two ideas accounts for the fact that, especially in face of so extreme a suppression of freedom as we have seen in Fascist Europe, the fight for freedom seemed to be a more urgent and pressing task than that indicated by the sober appeal to work for a just settlement of social conflicts. To be free to order one's own life as one thinks fit is in itself an immediate value, a value admittedly which many people do not appreciate until this freedom is taken away from them. Justice merely demands that this value should be subject to the condition that whilst striving for one's own freedom one must not forget to respect the rights of others. The importance of justice lies in this restriction, not in the revelation of new values. But this restriction is the indispensable condition of the value of any society. Where this condition is disregarded, every cause pursued at the price of the neglect of the claims of justice is valueless and unjustifiable—however noble the social ideals on which it rests.

JUSTICE AS THE IDEA OF EQUALITY

What is social justice? It has often been explained by the

idea of equality The latter expresses a fundamental and ineradicable demand of the feeling for justice, a protest against all the various privileges which have dominated social life through the ages, and the claim that equal chances in society be given to all But this interpretation of the idea of justice leads to difficulties as soon as we try to apply it to existing social conflicts and problems There is an uneasy suspicion that equality, if thoroughly carried out, would make for a uniformity of life which would hinder free development. It is argued that men are not all alike, that they have different gifts and interests, and that they therefore have different claims on society and possibilities of development To disregard these differences and force everybody into a uniform scheme would still affect different people unequally Independent and richly gifted individuals who find it more difficult than others to fit themselves into a set scheme would be more harshly affected than the more passive people, who are more ready to adapt themselves to their environment

These very objections, however, draw our attention to the fact that the idea of equality must not be confused with this kind of uniformity Equality, as demanded by our sense of justice, has nothing to do with the obliteration of variety. Justice does not protest against the differences between one human personality and another but against the privileges of those who gain profits by depriving others of their freedom and happiness These differences in the rights which society concedes to different individuals would not even be eliminated by external uniformity For there would still be the question by what pattern would the social uniform be cut, for whom would it be a strait-jacket worn under the compulsion of a ruling class ?

The ever-recurring misunderstanding which identifies equality with uniformity arises from a lack of clarity as to what we mean by our demand for equality As already pointed out the protest of justice is not against the natural differences between men but against the privileges which society concedes to some at the expense of depriving others of the chance of a free and happy life By privilege we mean

that where there is a conflict of interests and claims, the interests of some are regarded from the outset as of more importance than those of others. That is to say, they are so regarded without reference to the value or urgency of the interests themselves but in relation to the social status of the persons involved, their membership of a particular class, race or other social group. Against this inequality our demand is for a system of equality in which each will have an equal chance to satisfy his interests, at least in so far as this depends on social institutions.

To see the point more clearly we need only consider the kind of conflict which involves problems of justice. These are invariably conflicts involving more than one person. Not every conflict of interests is of this kind. There are cases in which a man is in conflict only with himself, when his own interests clash and he has to decide which of them he wants to satisfy at the expense of the others. It may be difficult and often puzzling for him to decide what to do, but as long as the problem concerns only his own interests there is no question of the defence or abolition of privilege. He has only himself to consider and has, therefore, no opportunity to disregard some of the interests concerned simply because they are not his interests but those of others, of persons that are not in a position to intervene in his decision.

The inequality with which the demand for justice is concerned arises from the fact that each individual is directly prompted by his own interests only—by the interests of other persons at best only in so far as he takes an interest in their satisfaction. Apart from considerations of justice, there will therefore be almost as many solutions to a conflict of clashing interests as there are persons affected. Each will uphold the solution that best serves his own interests without regard for the fact that it violates the interests of others, unless indeed he sympathises with these other interests, in which case he himself has an interest in their satisfaction. The solution actually accepted—if no consideration of justice is admitted—no longer depends on the weighing up of the various interests, but on the skill and power with which each individual

happens to fight for his own cause

To give an equal chance to all therefore means to arrive at a solution of the conflict which is independent of this distinction of persons, which treats all the clashing interests as if they were conflicting interests within the same individual. If this principle is adhered to, we avoid all the privileges of individuals or favoured social groups based on their physical, economic or social superiority, and enabling them to overrule with impunity the interests of their social inferiors. Justice demands that the weighing up of clashing interests shall not stop at the frontier dividing the interests of an individual or a social group from those of others, but that all interests involved shall be taken into account on whichever side of the frontier they stand

THE CRITERION OF EQUALITY

An old objection raised against every attempt to establish a permanent standard binding on all members of a society is that it would inevitably stifle the life of that society. For how could any such standard meet the demands of constantly changing conditions? All the rules of social intercourse, which we accept to make our mutual relationships clearer and more easily predictable, have been established with reference to the circumstances existing at the time. Where this fact has been ignored and an attempt made to treat these temporary rules as eternal moral laws the fruitful growth and development of society has been arrested. The resulting paralysis of the social structure is aptly described by Goethe - "Reason becomes unreason, benefits burdens. Woe to those with such an inheritance."

How does this apply to the standard of equality which we have just found to be the guiding principle in conditions of social justice? Equality requires nothing but that the interests of the weaker shall not be disregarded simply because they are the interests of the weaker and because in this society certain favoured groups occupy a privileged position. Equality demands the ending of class privilege. But precisely

how equality is to be established, what social forms and institutions conform to it or contradict it—these things are not established by the principle itself. They are questions which have to be decided according to the social conditions prevailing at the time, and the answer may therefore vary in different conditions. It will depend upon the interests that exist in that society, on the extent to which the satisfaction of some of these interests prevents the satisfaction of others. It also depends on the means available in the society whereby one section can bring other members under its domination. The means and methods employed by a ruling class vary according to the natural resources of the country and the stage of civilisation reached through the advance of technical and scientific knowledge. The reproach of rigidity therefore cannot be levelled against the standard of justice. On the contrary, the decision as to what should or should not be done in given conditions is so dependent on those conditions that the question may well be asked whether freedom to adapt rules to existing conditions does not entail renouncing the criterion by which we can distinguish right from wrong. According to the standard of justice, this distinction was to be the result of a weighing up of clashing interests. But how is this to be done? How can we decide which of these interests deserves to be satisfied and which have to yield for the sake of overriding interests? The principle of equality demands only that the decision shall be made without anyone having an initial privilege, nobody shall enjoy advantages which are only his because he and other members of his class can disregard and override the interests of others. But what weight shall we ascribe to these other interests and how are we to determine which interests deserve priority?

To this question the principle of equality supplies no automatic answer. It demands no more than that the judge in a conflict should weigh fairly all the conflicting interests as if they all equally concerned him, as if therefore they were all his own interests and as if it were a case of a conflict of interests within one person. Now we know that even such conflicts within a person can be very difficult to solve. We

shall therefore expect to find similar difficulties in trying to settle conflicts between different persons on the principle of equality of rights. True though this is, we must not therefore lose sight of the incisive and definite quality even of the negative formula that privileges are no longer to be permitted. The extent of the political consequences of this condition can be realised if we consider the valid Marxian inference that the history of all hitherto existing societies is a history of class struggles. For the class character of a society is shown in that one class shapes social relationships to suit its own interests and is able to dominate the rest of the society by its control over the essentials of life. It is sufficient to be born a member of the ruling class to participate in its privileges. Against the inequality inherent in this class system we set the demand for just social relationships. Thus the demand for equality is no vague slogan. The socialist programme, aiming to free society from class privileges, is an expression of the inalienable claims of man's sense of justice.

PROBLEMS OF APPLICATION

The question has still to be answered how we are to decide between the conflicting interests of different people. The problem is difficult, because, as we have seen, even the conflict of interests within one and the same person is difficult to settle, as it is not always evident to the individual concerned which of his interests he should prefer. This difficulty of choice may partly be explained from the fact that he has not sufficient knowledge of all the circumstances. If he does not know exactly on what the success of his efforts may depend, he will be uncertain what to do to achieve as much as possible of what he wants. If he makes a mistake in his estimate of the situation, he may find himself working against his own interests. So it is quite understandable that men, conscious of the possibility of error, hesitate before making important decisions and perhaps turn uncertainly from one solution to another.

The same difficulty arises where conflicts of interests between

different persons are concerned. If decisions are made with incomplete knowledge of all the circumstances or are based on an incorrect estimate of the situation, the consequences may be unintended and perhaps even fatal. In that case, however, the risk threatens the interests not merely of the man who makes the decision, but also of others who are entitled to have their interests respected. A responsible person will be particularly careful to examine all the circumstances because of his obligation towards other people's interests.

In so far as it is possible, by such an examination, to gain sufficient knowledge of the circumstances to make a fair decision, no new ethical problem arises. Justice obviously demands that decisions in which the interests of others are concerned (and every political decision is of this kind) must be based on an examination of all the circumstances. This is only another consequence of what we have already argued, that the principle of justice cannot be represented as a code of unchangeable rules and regulations but must be interpreted according to the actual conditions in any given situation.

There is a deeper difficulty in cases where we cannot foresee with any certainty what the consequences of our decision may be. This is a constant problem in political life and is particularly acute in times of crisis like the present. For instance, almost every decision in the conduct of military operations is inevitably full of risks, whether the decision be to take the initiative oneself or to leave it to the enemy to do so, and the lives of innumerable people may be at stake. It is impossible to avoid this risk because vital information may be entirely inaccessible to those who have to make decisions, or sometimes because they are unable to gather all the relevant information in time. The same applies in other fields of social life. The introduction of economic measures, the exploitation of technical inventions, the building up of a Party or a State apparatus—all confront the politician with the same problem of allowing for the risk that is involved in his decision.

But however heavily this uncertainty may weigh on men

conscious of their responsibility, it does not mean that our criterion is inapplicable here. It requires of the politician that, to the best of his knowledge and conscience, he must weigh the possible consequences of his actions against each other. For this purpose he must seek the advice of those who have proved specially able to estimate the expected consequences, he must exclude from counsel those who are known to be heedless of risks where others, and not they themselves, are concerned. Such a course of action requires knowledge of affairs and of men. In some cases experience and high powers of judgment are called for. But all these difficulties merely concern our more or less imperfect knowledge of the facts and we can and must tackle them to the best of our ability. They do not involve any lack of clarity in the standard of value on which the decision ought to be based.

THE CONCEPTION OF FREEDOM

A lack of clarity only arises where after a thorough examination of facts there is still an uncertainty as to the interest that ought to be preferred, or, where a decision involves risks, as to whether the aim pursued is worth such risks. Here is the place for such questions as what sacrifices are justified in the struggle for a better social order, what burdens the individual should be asked to accept, say, for the sake of furthering art or science, or the question whether interests not regarded as strictly economic should find a place in the economic system—as, for instance, the interest to choose an occupation for its own sake, even if it is economically disadvantageous.

In these cases the problem is to estimate the value of the various claims. And it cannot be solved simply by considering how a person would decide if without prejudice or partiality he weighed all the conflicting interests against each other. Even where an individual has only his own conflicting interests to deal with, the decision may be neither easy nor obvious even to the person concerned. If his interest in security, comfort or pleasure struggles with his desire for a fuller and

keener life, or maybe with his interest in science or art or his desire to take part in the building of a better social order, it may well be that he is uncertain which of these aims are worth the sacrifice of the others

His vacillations reveal a lack of uncertainty about his real interests. In practice we make a distinction between what a person wants at the moment, perhaps instinctively and irrationally, and what are in the given circumstances his real interests—what would be good for him. The fact that we make this distinction implies that his passing desires and urges are not necessarily in harmony with what he himself would, on reflection, recognise as good and valuable.

These desires result from immediate stimuli—and it is by no means certain that they will not conflict with other interests of the individual which can be less immediately satisfied, and are therefore at the moment forgotten. It is even less certain that such fleeting desires conform to his deeper interest in giving his life a lasting value.

So we arrive again at the conclusion that there is no natural, inevitable connection between what actually happens and what is good and valuable. This is true of the use man makes of his own life. To be clear in one's own mind what aims are worth pursuing requires thought and perseverance. It requires even stronger efforts to build one's life deliberately on these foundations. Comparatively few people have seriously tried to direct their lives in this way and have not been defeated by the difficulties. By far the greater number seem to live within so rigid a framework of established tradition and custom that little room for individual choice and decision is left, save in more or less trifling matters.

Yet how can anyone who does not understand his own interests deal fairly with the interests of others? What is to be his criterion when, after exhaustive examination of the facts, he has to decide what are the true interests of each participant and what value they have?

If this criterion is not to be an arbitrary one, or to be based uncritically on prejudice, we must use the method of abstraction which helped us in analysing the demand for

equality We have again to enquire what are the first reactions of people to the problems of the value and importance of conflicting interests, and what are the standards which prompt these reactions

It must be borne in mind that what we are seeking is a guide for the politician We do not therefore ask how an individual can best pursue his true interests and thus make of his life something worthy of his efforts Our concern is the extent to which the individual who strives to live in this way is dependent on prevailing social conditions This leads us to find out what are the true interests involved in social conflicts and deserving our respect in working out a solution. In this way we can decide what are the goods and values to which every member of a society should have equal access

We have already noted the answer to this question put forward to-day with increasing urgency under the impact of world war and fascism. The struggle against these forces of destruction has been accepted as a struggle for freedom.

The idea of freedom itself requires clarification, however. It has often been pointed out, rightly enough, that the idea is empty and negative until we know *from* what and *for* what we want freedom One modern statesman has proclaimed the Four Freedoms - freedom from want, freedom from fear, freedom of speech and religion This declaration is often regarded as an expression of what the social struggle to-day is about But any such enumeration of freedoms leaves us still in the dark as to the grounds on which this choice of freedoms is made Consequently we have no guarantee that the selection is exhaustive, nor does it provide a criterion by which we may judge between the values of the different freedoms should one happen to conflict with another or with other values in life

However, attempts to go more deeply into the human longing for freedom only lead us back, apparently, to the problem of the meaning and value of life When a man asks "Freedom for what?" and "Freedom from what?" he shows he is not indifferent to the use that may be made of freedom He seeks its value in that a man is free for something that

gives his life value. Where an individual takes no thought of the value and meaning of his life and uses freedom merely to indulge his passing urges and caprices, he is abusing his freedom and it then loses its value.

The judgment that the value of freedom has to be measured by the purposes for which it is used is found in every serious statement of the human claim to freedom. It is revealed in the consciousness that freedom is not a good presented to man by circumstances when they happen to be favourable, but something which cannot be won without one's own effort. Anyone who desires freedom to shape his life as seems best to him has to face decisions not always easy to make. He takes on himself the responsibility for what he makes of his life. Many people shrink from such responsibility. Thus freedom is often regarded as a dangerous gift, and men have preferred to have their lives directed by an authority which would relieve them of the difficulty of deciding what they should or should not do.

The fundamental difficulty we meet here is obviously that of properly reconciling two claims, both connected with freedom. There is the claim that men can and should be free to shape their own lives, and the claim that in doing so they should not make arbitrary decisions but be guided by consideration of the ends that are worth living for. To support the first claim and ignore the second is to confuse freedom with license. To concentrate on the second and forget the first leads men to draw up codes for their fellow men, encouraging them to refer to authority rather than to exercise their own powers of judgment.

In either case the high conception of freedom for which men have struggled and died is relinquished. This high conception is based on trust in man's ability to order his thought and action in the light of what he himself recognises to be good and true. Furthermore it implies confidence that man can use this ability and rationally determine his own life.

We have already found that this ability can at least be detected in every considered thought and act, even though its operation is narrowly restricted by instinct and passion,

prejudice and thoughtlessness To extend these limits, to overcome the inner obstacles to an independent rational ordering of one's life is a task that the individual has to undertake for himself if he seriously aspires to have freedom But the question whether the environment in which he grows up and the conditions under which he lives help or hinder him to appreciate the value and the responsibilities of freedom is a social question, a question of just laws and institutions. This is the question with which we are here concerned Since it is in man's true interest to be free, though he is often unaware of it, justice demands that every member of a society shall have an equal opportunity to shape his own life in a rational way, in so far as this opportunity depends on social conditions

There are many ways in which social conditions can deny men this opportunity for example, poverty which absorbs all a man's powers in the economic struggle, the menace of unemployment and war which prevents the planning of one's life with any sense of security, an excess of economic planning and prohibitive regulations, depriving the individual of the right of decision on vital issues and compelling him to abide by the rulings of others Such restrictions may nevertheless challenge a freedom-loving person to take up the fight against them, it is the man who wears the shoe who knows where it pinches Of a more dangerous character are those restrictions that do not arouse opposition Systems of education designed not to bring up free personalities but docile creatures who will accept without question the authority of a State or a Church or a traditional set of opinions, destroy at an early stage the child's confidence that he can learn to govern himself and make his own decisions

So to the questions "Freedom from what?" "Freedom for what?" we reply - freedom from all restrictions which block the way to rational self-determination, freedom for each one to consider what gives value to his life and to decide for himself how to live in the light of this insight

Every member of society has an equal right to this freedom unless and until he shows by criminal acts that he is unworthy of it.

CHAPTER VI

POLITICS AS MORAL TASK

SOCIETY THE CONCERN OF ALL

TUA res agitur—"Something of concern to all," says a Roman poem. Only if we find that these words are applicable to our investigation regarding the ideals of peace, freedom and justice have we taken a step forward. For this investigation is not intended as a purely academical one, it should serve a practical political purpose. Our starting point was the recognition that as regards social development there is no *inevitable* advance towards the good society. Progress in society is not something which falls from the skies into our lap. It is dependent upon the efforts of human beings. But will a sufficient number of people set about this task with the requisite amount of determination? Certainly only those with a clear and lively interest in peace, freedom and justice come in question. But even that is not enough. They must not only understand the nature of these ideals but be resolved to work to achieve them. The essential question is: What sense and value is there in the participation in this task?

We are not concerned here with prophesying how many people will conceivably make a positive decision in this matter and what energies they will expend in following their aim. It is the ethical question that interests us, whether human beings can have and can discover a valid reason for accepting the struggle for peace, freedom and justice as their task. The implications of this struggle differ with different people and

they change with changing circumstances. What is demanded of human beings at different periods is influenced by ever-changing political and economic conditions. The inhibitions and desires within people that stand in conflict with ethical claims also vary in form and degree in different people. We need, therefore, a very firm conviction if we are to weigh up again and again in each new situation the conflicting claims and interests, guided only by the single aim of establishing freedom and justice in society.

Can we find such a conviction in human reason? Do we encounter it when people are faced with the question of their personal contribution and, perhaps, of their responsibility for social developments?

All experience goes to show that this question about individual responsibility agitates the mind more acutely in periods when the gulf between social realities and the ideals of justice and freedom is revealed with particular clarity. The forces of resistance which made themselves felt in oppressed Europe, and which united whole nations in the struggle for freedom, did not arise because an easy victory seemed imminent. Some years before, when the consolidation of the Nazi regime and the perfection of its war machine could have been checked at a much lower cost in human life and suffering than was demanded later, the necessary readiness to act decisively was lacking. A few people with foresight tried in vain to achieve what was later done under the immediate pressure of the Nazi terror. Eventual resistance to Nazi oppression developed great momentum despite the fact that heavy sacrifices in terms of life and all that makes life valuable were demanded, whilst earlier the amount of time and energy demanded would have been much less. When the French resistance movement awoke to life, some months after the collapse in June, 1940, it drew its strength precisely from the belief that the struggle had to be waged no matter whether the outcome proved to be success or failure. When in the summer and autumn of the same year the British people stood alone against a formidable enemy that had raced from success to success, when they faced air attacks and the threat of invasion, the will to hold

out whatever the consequences grew stronger, and united the whole nation

Admittedly, there was no shortage of people who capitulated to Fascism or evaded the struggle against it although they knew well enough how evil this system was. Most people who acquiesced in it sought to explain their attitude by enumerating the various things they would have otherwise sacrificed. It was said that one had to live, to look after one's family, or to complete some artistic or scientific piece of work which required undivided attention.

Compared with the convictions of those who faced danger, poverty and insecurity and yet did not abandon the resistance struggle, all these arguments betray a failure to consider and weigh up conflicting claims. It is true they give an answer to the question of how far one can and ought to go in making sacrifices for the sake of realising a decent social order, for a very exact line is drawn which under no circumstances shall be crossed. But it is drawn only with an eye on those things in life which one is not prepared to risk. Rarely is the attempt made to compare the value of these things with the urgency of the claim for help in the struggle for peace, justice and freedom.

The difference, therefore, between those who join this struggle and those who refuse to pay the necessary price, especially in times like the present, need not necessarily be traceable to different standards. Some people, possibly stirred by some particularly drastic experience, may have widened their horizon and reviewed their previous standards in the light of new claims which pushed themselves into the foreground, whilst others have clung persistently to old established values and refused to open their minds seriously to new claims. In such cases, the difference in attitude rests on the fact that different people have concluded their weighing up of the problem at different points.

The standard of values which guides our feelings in the process of weighing up shows itself most clearly when people, in reflecting upon the good, do not hesitate to consider new claims which might run counter to the interests they have

previously pursued. This is the case with those people who, in response to the challenge of our time and its catastrophes, are willing to compare the values they have esteemed in the past with the urgent need for them to take an active part in the fight for freedom and social justice. It is not the case with those who refuse to consider anything outside the established scope of their lives.

What is this feeling which induces people to regard the struggle against slavery and exploitation as the prime purpose of their lives, even at a risk of being defeated? It gives expression to two things: one is a judgment on society, on the prevailing exploitation and oppression, the other the realisation that only by sheer self-deception can we try to give a purpose to our individual lives without considering the tasks which face us in public life.

The first point leads us back to the question as to the value of the society in which we live. Disregard for freedom and justice is not some blemish which can be outbalanced by other social values. Even if Hitler had succeeded throughout Occupied Europe in eliminating unemployment, in establishing a planned economy in order to stabilise his regime on the Continent and prepare for further expansion, even the advantages which might have accrued to the peoples of Europe would not have made good the violation of even the most elementary demands of justice. For those who respect these demands there can be no compromise with the representatives of such a regime.

But is it necessary to oppose them? Time and time again, people who were perfectly aware of the nature of the Nazi regime have tried to hold aloof from the political struggle for its overthrow in order to serve aims which they considered had a value independent of the social conditions of the time. Scientific institutes in which they carried out research, artistic activities to which they were devoted, personal relations in the family or between friends, all became islands in the political stream of events where they dwelt secure from the political upheavals and unmolested by the conflicts of the world.

This attitude of escapism from a threat which affects the whole fate of society is rejected by those who have weighed up the claims of their individual lives against the bigger issues affecting humanity. The so-called independence of such a life of seclusion is an illusion. Devotion to art or science, to the creation of relatively free human relations which is possible in such a protected environment has helped to mislead the world about the real state of affairs in society. Indeed it has been assiduously exploited for this very purpose. Those who adapt themselves to a regime such as Hitler's and close their eyes to the political happenings around them for the sake of things which in themselves are valuable, support and strengthen the system in taking up such an attitude. There can be no neutrality when people stand face to face with the moral and cultural decline of a corrupt social order. Those who do not struggle against it grant it their support. However fine and noble the achievements otherwise attained, they are rendered worthless by the share in the social injustices with which they are burdened.

Kant stated

"Where justice is dead, there is no sense in mankind's continuing to live"

The sharp rigidity of these words has provoked dissent. The same protest may be levelled against the previous assertion that participation in the struggle against injustice has an importance above all other tasks which we may set ourselves. How can this rigid claim be reconciled with the ideal of freedom according to which each individual should consider and choose for himself the ideals and purposes he wants to pursue?

As we have already noted, this idea of freedom is not in itself an adequate guide when deciding upon the most valuable course of action. The members of a ruling caste may freely shape their own lives while arbitrarily excluding all others from the same possibility, in which case their claim to freedom is an insult and, being unjustifiable, merits no respect even though it enables a privileged class to further art, science and culture.

The same idea applies when we enquire into the responsibilities of the individual for the furthering of social developments. Those who, in the name of the ideal of freedom, seek to hold themselves aloof from the chaos and the injustices that surround them and gain the upper hand, do in fact will these evils, for they tolerate them. At the same time they refuse to act in solidarity with the innocent victims of injustice and with those who strive to create a society worthy of human beings. Yet those others are dependent upon that solidarity, if they are to carry on.

Thus it is the idea of justice which challenges the conception that no limits should be placed upon the exercise of freedom. This idea expresses itself in two ways: in the interest of the individual in a decent society, and in the rightful claims of our fellow-men that we should sustain their efforts to establish such a society.

Interpreted in this way, limitations placed upon the exercise of freedom in no way stand in conflict with the ideal of freedom. This ideal sets us the task of shaping our lives in accordance with a considered judgment about the good. Such rational self-determination cannot ignore the idea of justice, if it goes deep enough into the meaning of the good. If we ourselves reflect seriously enough about the crisis of our time and what is required of us, we are led to seek the purpose of our lives in the part we can play in over-coming that crisis and thus in establishing just relations between individuals and between nations. *Tua res agitur*

But in reaching this conclusion, have we not succumbed to utopia? If all people are able to recognise that their participation in the political struggle is necessary in their own interests, is not then simple enlightenment about those interests enough to end the existing world order and establish a better one in its place?

It is a fact that the attempt has often been made to substitute such work of enlightenment for the political struggle with all its hardships. Yet attempts of this kind have never succeeded in attaining any decisive changes in society. Indeed, how could they?

To enlighten and educate people, we need time and leisure and circumstances which stimulate people to think about the things that are worth while in life

Such educational work is therefore dependent on the existing social conditions. A comprehensive scheme of education cannot exist as long as political power is wielded by people who are governed by their own personal interests and those of their family or class, however much they talk of freedom and justice. Those in power will always oppose such an educational scheme, because their own position would become untenable if it were to succeed, and they have the power to destroy the factors that are important for its success. Anyone really interested in the enlightenment of the masses must therefore concentrate, in the first place, on the task of getting political power into the hands of people who welcome and support this enlightenment. These can only be people who are confident that their policy will be approved by enlightened people who care for peace and justice.

This brings us back to the old Platonic saying that either kings must become philosophers—men with the self-knowledge and self-control necessary always to know what values in life are worth striving for and to live accordingly—or philosophers must become kings. Confucius expressed the same idea when he taught his disciples that they should accept the responsibility of establishing just social relations, for “it is by taking office that the noble do their duty”.

It is, therefore, indeed utopian to try and better social conditions by instruction and education only. To create and secure social justice is a political task. If it is to succeed, this task must be undertaken by people who find in it the fulfilment and the meaning of their lives and who, consequently, are determined to give it priority over conflicting interests.

Where are we to find such people? On the basis of our argument the answer is a twofold one. On the one hand, the urgency of the appeal can be understood by everyone able to take considered action and to observe what is going on around him. On the other hand, this understanding comes to nobody

as a gift of nature, at least with the clarity and resolution necessary to make it the controller of the will, nobody is predestined for it by his innate disposition or environment. The natural forces which influence the development of any human being may help or hinder his understanding of the urgency of this task. They may divert his attention and interest from the question of the meaning and value of life, or they may lead him to reflect about himself. Nobody is free from the pressure of internal and external forces which make it difficult for him to get straight. Some people may find it harder than others to overcome these obstacles—but nobody finds it easy. It is an aim that has to be striven for, by a persistent and relentless effort. What we need are politicians who have made this effort and are prepared to go on doing so.

We have seen that the enlightenment and education of the people is impossible without the prior achievement of political changes. Now we have found that this political spadework cannot be undertaken except by people properly trained for it. Is this a vicious circle, leading us from the educational task to the political and back again? No! for we are not back at the utopian idea of putting social conditions right by general education alone. Education, as we now conceive it, is not an end in itself—it is no more and no less than a necessary means to a political end. Those who go in for this education do not overlook the fact that social progress is opposed by political forces which cannot be overcome by persuasion or education and which control the educational institutions of society. This type of political education is therefore not for all, and is no substitute for the political struggle. It is for those who in the existing circumstances are best suited and most willing to engage in the political struggle for peace, freedom and justice. Its purpose is to strengthen them for this fight, so that, constantly facing up to new conflicts and tasks as they arise, they will remain true to their goal.

THE PURPOSE OF POLITICAL EDUCATION

Is it at all possible thus to train men and women for their political tasks ? We have deduced the necessity of such education from the fact that, whereas everybody can see the urgency of the task and fulfil it, nobody has this insight and preparedness to act as a gift of nature

Many people believe the contrary, that the field in which a man can best work depends primarily on his intellectual gifts, on his abilities or even on a special calling. They maintain that this is especially true in the political field, because here stupidity and self-interest have done so much harm and still do so. And this harm affects, not individuals only, but entire classes and peoples, it affects human society itself. According to this school of thought, therefore, only those who feel a strong urge from within to fight against social evils ought to do so. For if a man does this without the strong urge, he is in danger of being overwhelmed by the difficulties, and of adding to the number of those who impede and distort social progress by indecision, selfishness and stupidity.

A warning against this type of politician is only too apt. In hardly any other province of human activity is it as widely assumed as in politics that from a certain age onwards everyone can and should have a say. In hardly any other field are there fewer expert tests whether anyone claiming an influence on events is well-informed and disinterested enough to act in a way which is really in the interest of those affected. As long as access to political offices which require special knowledge and responsibility can be obtained on the strength of clever propaganda or economic pressure, it will be a matter of chance whether social justice is achieved and with what skill and consistency it is pursued. Many serious people have refrained from taking part in politics because they have felt that too many unqualified and dishonest people were already making trouble in the political field, and that they, too, would not be equal to the task. Instead of blundering in politics, they have preferred tasks which they considered more in keeping with their own abilities.

This is understandable, but it is a reaction which aggravates the evil instead of removing it. If those who realise the need for establishing justice in society turn away from politics, they will then leave the field to others who are either unaware of the magnitude of the political tasks or who lack interest in their solution. Anybody who has conceived these tasks as having the first and foremost claim on his life will therefore not be content to wait for others who are inspired by their innate sense of justice, and whose natural gifts ensure their triumph over obstacles and opponents. On the contrary, he will look to his own strength and resources in order to find out how he can best contribute them to the solution of these tasks, and what training he needs to do this with success.

Experience teaches us that more people will realise this at times when general interest is focussed on the political field more sharply than usual by extraordinary events and incidents. We may again mention the fact that the resistance movements in Europe mobilised entire peoples. Those who have become aware that the fight for freedom is their concern and requires their personal participation are far more numerous than those who take an interest in politics in general. In the resistance movement unity has not been the result of a community of natural endowment, inclination or way of thinking. It was the result of being at the mercy of a ruthless enemy. Despite all counter-measures, this common experience kindled a fighting spirit in the oppressed, and at the same time a mutual understanding and solidarity among those who were exposed to the same oppression and fought the same fight.

It may be objected that this sense of community, born of such tremendous experiences, will last only as long as the common emergency. Even in the days when the collapse of the Hitler regime was only imminent, there were signs that unity was in danger. Men and women, who for the sake of the common cause had readily given up their special wishes and class privileges, began to consider whether they could not perhaps get out more cheaply.

It would be wrong to deny that there have been experiences

of this kind. But what do they prove? Merely that even an object lesson like that of 1940 is nothing but a reminder to human beings of their social responsibilities, it does not ensure that they will continue to remember their responsibilities when faced with the distracting temptations of other times. Even great events like those of 1940 do not relieve us of the task of clarifying our understanding of this responsibility and strengthening our will to fulfil it.

We cannot here examine in detail how this special educational task should be undertaken and by what means it will achieve its purpose. In so far as it is necessary to show that such educational work is possible, it will suffice to point out that it does not seek to force the individual into a scheme which is alien to him, but primarily to assist him to become aware of what is right and good. As for the further question, upon what guiding principles political education is to be constructed, we have space only for a few hints which may indicate the immense scope of the task.

This kind of education can and must begin with the self-examination which is stimulated by vital experiences in the personal and in the social field. It is the task of education to prevent this self-examination from being prematurely interrupted or distorted. In the life of society, it is menaced in many ways. Too many difficulties in the way may discourage people and blunt their purpose, and so may the daily drudgery of routine work as a result of which a keen interest in the task is forgotten. And, as psycho-analysis has taught us, it may be disturbed by urges and wishes which are repressed from consciousness so that it is impossible rationally to examine and accept or reject them.

There are pedagogical and psychological methods, worked out on the basis of experience, which provide guidance in overcoming these dangers. For the purposes of political education, however, it is still necessary to ask how far the elimination of these inhibitions helps one to analyse more deeply the value and meaning of one's life. To train people to work on themselves in this way is the great task that confronts us.

The success or failure of political education will become apparent only in the political arena. It is the task of political education to give an ethical basis to politics and thus to eliminate the many symptoms of decadence so prevalent in our day. This task does not end when people have decided to fight for the realisation of justice, peace and freedom. The real question is what comes of this decision in the day-to-day political struggle.

Many people assert that politics will almost necessarily corrupt a man's character, and all the more so if he pursues his aim with unusual determination and tenacity. For all the greater will be the temptation to abandon the moral scruples which hamper him in overcoming obstacles and dealing with political opponents. Having once yielded to this temptation, he will soon be prepared to take any step which promises to remove obstacles from his path and bring him nearer his goal. It would appear that, in the political struggle, the unscrupulous always have the advantage over those who are restrained by their consciences and refuse to use means which they do not consider right and good. Do not the moral and ethical considerations which guide us in the selection of our aim handicap us in the choice of our means of action? Does not the politician who depends upon them lose in striking force and effectiveness what he has gained in determination and moral integrity?

Behind these doubts lies uncertainty as to what is permissible in the political struggle if we desire to adhere to enlightened ethical principles. To this question there are two answers which appear to point in different directions. One emerges from the importance for human society of the chosen political aim. This aim is based on more than the wishes and desires of one or even of a few individuals—it springs from certain demands of justice which ought to be observed in the life of the community, and to which anybody who cares thoroughly and without prejudice to examine them can assent. When confronted with conflicting claims and interests, therefore, this aim can claim priority. The implication is that means which violate otherwise legitimate interests, and which

would therefore be wrong in other circumstances, are permissible and even essential if they are required in the fight for this political end

On the other hand, however, if the consideration of what is good, and should therefore be done, is seriously intended, it cannot be confined to a single sphere, to the setting of a single goal in life. Anyone who really wishes to improve social conditions stands, whether he admits it or not, for certain moral claims of justice by which he judges the relationships between human beings. He has a conception of the way in which these relations should be regulated, and cannot, therefore, consistently evade the question how far he himself applies them in his dealings with his fellow men. This consideration does not necessarily coincide with that of the appropriateness of a certain line of behaviour to produce a certain political effect.

In political practice these two lines of thought seem to tend towards opposite extremes. The first is easily recognised in the argument used to support the maxim that "the end justifies the means,"—as applied to the political end of social progress—which, it is suggested, justifies every means which helps to further it. The second appears in the charge that this maxim has poisoned political life even where it was originally applied to a good end.

To give an example. Is there in political life a duty to be truthful and to treat as binding the promises and treaties one has entered into? In all fields of political life we are confronted with the question whether and how far it is excusable to obtain political influence by applying fraudulent methods. According to the principle that the end justifies the means, there is only one barrier to the application of such methods, and that is the possibility that they might become an obstacle to the attainment of that end. This might, for instance, happen if the exposure of a fraud were to arouse mistrust among people on whose trusting co-operation or toleration the politician depends. But even then, if he sticks to the maxim he has the choice of avoiding this danger of loss of confidence either by being genuinely trustworthy or

by learning how to lull growing mistrust and avert suspicion. The political experience of all times gives plenty of clues as to how this can be done. The choice between these two ways of behaviour depends, by this standard, only on the utilitarian consideration which of these ways leads most quickly and easily to the desired end? Any lie or broken promise is justified if it fulfils this condition. Pursued to the extreme, this consideration of expediency applies to everybody to the ally no less than to the political adversary, to the enemy with whom one is confronted in open warfare, but equally to one's own fellow-countrymen, to one's own class and party comrades with whom one deals on the basis of common laws, associations and forms of organisation.

We know that these conclusions have in fact been reached, not by cynics and fascists alone, but also by political groups whose avowed aim is a classless socialist society. Programmes, slogans, agreements sponsored by these groups or their leaders are treated by them as mere instruments in the establishment of power positions. They are adhered to as long as they help in the attainment and extension of political influence. When, however, they no longer serve this purpose or when incompatible slogans or alliances seem more expedient, the former programmes are forgotten and the old promises broken as if they had never existed.

Such methods have rightly been denounced as demoralising and poisonous in their effect on political life. It has come to the point that when one deals with people who use these methods, one has to be ready for everything—for lies, treachery, the violation of recognised laws and standards. Thus it has actually become impossible to co-operate with them with any confidence. There can be no human intercourse worthy of the name, i.e., based on mutual understanding and not upon force, except in so far as one can trust one's partner's promises and statements. The maxim that the end justifies the means has therefore destroyed the very foundation on which human confidence and co-operative effort can be built.

What, then, are we to put in place of this maxim? Is

it always wrong to tell lies and to break promises, no matter who is being deceived and for what purpose it is done ? Any-one who goes so far in the rejection of considerations of expediency may at any time find himself sacrificing to his rigid righteousness the very end for which he cares. Take, for instance, the case of the illegal struggle in oppressed Europe against the Nazi régime. To refuse to attempt to over-reach and deceive the enemy would have meant abandoning the struggle. Now it is certainly easy to argue that one has no obligation to keep faith with an opponent who by his crimes has placed himself beyond the bounds of law and order. If, however, one exception is permitted, the problem arises as to where exactly is the borderline between justified and unjustified lying. Are lying and deceit permissible only when we are faced with a political opponent who uses such means himself ? It is impossible to draw the line here, because it often becomes necessary to deny the truth to people who, though not opponents themselves, might otherwise betray it. Moreover, it is quite impossible to say in advance what methods may prove necessary in the fight for a better social order, and anyone who is seriously concerned with this aim might be faced with the necessity of making himself responsible for a lie or breach of faith.

People often try to evade this difficulty by saying that a good end can never be served by bad means. Instead of solving the problem, this suggestion obscures the issue. The problem is whether the means are bad if they are necessary in the attainment of a good end. Experience has taught us that there are only two possible courses open to people who are reluctant to touch pitch for fear of being defiled: they will either withdraw from the political arena altogether, or else they will sooner or later abandon this principle because the necessities of the political struggle make them do so. This attitude, therefore, results in practice either in abandoning the aim, or serving it with a bad conscience, and therefore half-heartedly. It provokes the equally justified criticism of the "realists" that these moral reservations are really only a pretext to evade the most urgent tasks of our time.

There are a number of other problems which shed some light on this conflict between these two incompatible modes of thought. There is, for instance, the important question of the consideration which an individual may claim in the course of a political action for his personal rights, claims and wishes. From the standpoint of the maxim that the end justifies the means, the individual is a mere instrument to achieve that end. In that case, the way he is treated will depend only on the consideration whether he is a useful means to that end or whether he is or might become an obstacle in the way. If he is useful, he should be used, if he is an obstacle, he must be rendered harmless, in either case he has no right to a say even as to the way the one thing or the other happens. Here, too, experience shows where, in practice, this attitude leads. It has made individuals mere mouthpieces of political parties, prepared at the command of their leaders to turn a political somersault overnight without taking the least account of the relation between this political turn and the political aim originally adopted. In these men and women who have been used as mere instruments in the political struggle for the betterment of human society, the very thing on which the struggle should have been based has been destroyed: the realisation of their responsibility for the life of society and their constant endeavour to think out what ought to be done in recognition of this responsibility.

This attitude too has naturally been criticised and challenged. Its opponents have appealed to Kant's maxim that the reasonable human being should never consider himself and others merely as means but always as ends in themselves. But what does this imply in political life? A political party, sure of its common aims and determined to use its available forces to achieve them, is dependent on the discipline of its members and their readiness to conform. It is not always possible to thrash out differences of opinion before deciding on a certain course of action. What is to be done? The fear of becoming mere tools in case of such a conflict has again and again held people back from joining a political party, and as a result they have not seriously participated

at all in the struggle for a better state of society. It, in the first instance, the individual is ruthlessly sacrificed to the exigencies of the political struggle, we find, in the second case, the tendency to renounce the struggle itself whenever it threatens to obstruct the development of the personality. Is there a way out, which avoids both the danger of being unscrupulous in choosing the means and that of being so scrupulous in the choice of means as to imperil the aim itself?

THE CHOICE OF LEGITIMATE MEANS

Do our ethical and political convictions provide us with a clear answer to the question of what political means we are justified in using? That is the test of their realism. Our investigation has at least shown that this question cannot be answered with a kind of catalogue, listing on one side the means ethically permissible, and, on the other side, those which are not. Consideration of what is good and desirable has again and again led us to the task of weighing the claims arising in each set of circumstances against each other. The requirement of justice is merely that in a conflict of interests the decision shall depend, not upon the physical, economic or other superiority of one partner, but only upon the weighing up of the interests themselves and their importance to the person who holds them. Nobody has a right which exists once and for all, independent of a particular conflict of interests.

It has, however, frequently been alleged that there is such a thing as a natural right, for instance, the right to live, the right to the product of one's own labour, the right to the free development of one's personality, or the right not to be cheated and deceived. It is easy enough to understand why people think that these rights should be maintained in all circumstances and without exception. In all these instances important interests are concerned, conditions which enable us to make something sensible and valuable of our lives.

Nobody is entitled, without very good reasons, to deprive another person of this possibility or to hinder his using it.

Nevertheless, it remains true that there are higher values than life, or than the other values in question. Their significance is to be found in the fact that they help us to live for something worth devoting our lives to, something which we recognise as greater and more important than life itself and its pleasures. Thus there are clearly higher claims than the interests mentioned, and it may well be that we have to choose between these interests and those higher claims, between our own interests in life and freedom and property and those of our fellow men. Therefore none of these interests has the unlimited, unconditional claim of a right. They all cease to be justifiable as soon as they clash with the weightier claims of others.

Having made this clear, we have disposed of the argument that bad means are unavoidable in politics. Those who support this contention usually refer to encroachments on important human interests such as we have mentioned : to the sacrifice of human lives, robbery and theft, lying, cheating and violence. The use of such means, it is true, cannot always be avoided, inasmuch as the object is to intervene in the distribution of power in society and to reform it. Whether this is justified or not depends, as always, on the weighing up of the conflicting interests. The question therefore is, what we risk when we shrink back from such interference with human life, goods and values, and what we sacrifice by such interference.

In so far as the means in question are necessary in the struggle for a better social order, the interest in this aim must be taken into account in their favour. What weight it has in the scale depends on the clarity and sureness with which the purpose is envisaged. If it has been adopted as the result of really careful consideration about the proper aims of social endeavour, then it rests on our interest in the just solution of the conflicts which arise. Our earlier conclusion that the effort towards social justice is an indispensable condition of the value of any social order is the direct application of the principle of justice to the life of society. Since all conflicts between human beings ought to be settled justly and not

unilaterally in favour of the stronger or most influential party, it follows that all social institutions and claims are wrong which merely protect privileges, and conflict with the establishment of just conditions. It is right to insist that people should strive to create a social order where right is done. This demand should therefore have priority wherever it clashes with other claims, wishes, or ideals. No price is too high if it is necessary to pay it to achieve this aim.

We have thus acknowledged the principle which is usually quoted in support of the rule that the end justifies the means. The end in this case is an essential requirement of justice, and is therefore more important than any interests that may clash with it. For no interest is justified if it can only be satisfied by the perpetuation of unjust social conditions. That is the crucial point.

Once we clearly understand the basis of this idea we are able to avoid that fatal conclusion that any means is justified if the end in view deserves preference. Our consideration started with the criticism, brought against this policy of expediency, that the choice of means ought to be judged by the same standards of justice and morality as the choice of the end itself. We have found no reason to contradict this thesis, nor even to limit its application. If it has been said that where interests clash the fight for social justice should have preference, this does not mean an unlimited license to use any means. Here again we have to weigh fairly the interests concerned. Where human life and human freedom are at stake, where broken pledges or cheating are involved, the justification of such means requires more than the mere explanation that they are necessary in order to achieve political power which is to serve laudable ends. The question is whether the new power attained by the use of these means would be decisive and would really be used in the struggle for a just society, and also whether this step on the way to the just end could not be taken without injury to the values violated in this case. From the point of view of mere expediency these two questions are meaningless, because this point of view is concerned only with whether a form of

behaviour is useful in the service of a given end.

Thus there is a kernel of truth in both the attitudes in question. If we adhere to the principle of reaching our decisions by means of the impartial weighing up of conflicting interests, then we can reconcile the elements of truth in both attitudes and avoid the unsound conclusions which have been drawn from each of them. We then see that whilst the fight for just social conditions has priority over conflicting aims, it is nevertheless not an end which justifies the use of any means. We also see that conscientiousness in the choice of political methods does not lead to the abandonment of the desired end.

But have we not reached this theoretically satisfactory result at the price of accepting a principle which is extremely difficult to apply? The principle that the interests involved in an action should be weighed up against each other makes it necessary constantly to check up whether our own decisions are justified. This continual re-examination of our actions can be replaced neither by the choice of the right aim once and for all, nor by the application of self-evident rules which would differentiate between permissible and impermissible ways of acting. It requires us to be constantly on the alert, questioning whether our decisions have taken due account of the justified claims of others. This task is made even more difficult by the limited nature of all human knowledge and human experience. Nobody can with certainty foretell all the consequences which will follow from a decision of importance in his life. When weighing conflicting interests and estimating their respective values we shall therefore encounter problems which we can only solve to the best of our ability, but which will always entail the risk of our sizing up the situation wrongly and failing to recognise the interests involved in their right proportions.

Is it necessary for the politician to enter into these problems? There is certainly a temptation to avoid them, and this is what has, in fact, happened time and time again. Those who maintain that the end justifies the means think that considerations of this kind are an unnecessary burden

on a politician, distracting his attention and energy from the only thing that matters, the successful achievement of his progressive political programme. Those who, for well-founded reasons, reject this maxim but who do not credit human beings with the intelligence and will-power to make right decisions, look for the support of simple, clear-cut rules which would enable them to distinguish, once and for all, between means which are permissible and means which are not permissible. Both these views lead us astray. Our aim, the application of the principle of justice in the life of human society, does not make sense unless it is based upon the claim that conflicts of interests should be justly resolved. It can, therefore, be grasped and adhered to only by people who recognise that this principle of justice is a direct claim of their own understanding. To accept this aim but to fail to apply the principle of justice to the means that are to achieve it, reveals a lack of comprehension which leads, sooner or later, to our losing sight of the end itself.

It is, therefore, not a matter of indifference how we justify and defend our aim. We must remember its origin. It was not forced upon us by the natural course of social development, nor by a dictator wielding power, nor by the aspirations of a social class. We acquired it by gradually clarifying and deepening the first spontaneous valuations which people apply to social events. The end must therefore be pursued in such a way that its advocates can appeal to this common understanding, and that every person of good will can see that this political group represents what his own sense of justice will, on reflection, require. For this, it is essential that the political group in question should enjoy and deserve the confidence that, not only in the choice of its aims, but also in its organisational structure and tactical method and especially in the selection and training of its officials, it is motivated by considerations of justice.

THE TRUE UNION OF ETHICS AND POLITICS

This brings us back to the point from which we started.

We asked ourselves how political life could be cleansed of the social evils which have converted the great achievements of human industry and invention into instruments of destruction and oppression. Industry and inventiveness themselves obviously offer no safeguard against this danger—they have indeed been frequently used to serve man's selfish ends and blind lust for power. But what about the demand so frequently heard that we should look to moral principles and ethical forces to show us the way out of chaos?

We now have an answer. In our civilisation, industry and inventiveness have almost exclusively been used as a means to study and control the forces of nature and society. Scientific progress in the last century was primarily a great advance in natural science and technique. The one-sided nature of this development had grave consequences. In the natural sciences attention is concentrated on the investigation of the causes of events and the natural forces under which they occur, and scientists have therefore tended to overlook the ethical question of the value of human actions and aspirations. This does not mean that the question was not raised. It arises whenever a person seriously examines the meaning of his life. This happens, and will always happen, even though unorthodox scientists describe such enquiries as thoroughly unscientific, and as the mere subjective opinions of individuals.

The one-sided verdict of the scientists has had the disastrous consequence of shaking the belief that the spontaneous moral judgment can be developed into a reliable understanding of the truth. But where the public affairs of human society are concerned—the question, for instance, of what ought to be done in the life of society and in what respects protection from the arbitrary interference of individuals is called for, or what rules should govern the relations between members of a nation and between different nations—an answer based on mere opinion is not good enough, for the feelings and prejudices of one person might conflict with those of another. We need a better safeguard than emotional decisions, for two reasons. First, because our spontaneous judgment loses its sureness when it is applied to events which we do not per-

sonally witness. Social interactions, with the resulting interdependencies of individuals and groups, cannot be so simply observed that the weighing up of the interests affected at each stage can be safely left to our spontaneous feeling for right and wrong. Secondly, in these important public matters, decisions involving the principle of justice should be made and defended in a way which enables all concerned to see they are just and right. It will not do to rely on mere feelings, which by their very nature do not permit of rational justification or explanation.

These ethical questions must therefore receive the same careful attention and consideration as modern scientists apply in their own province. It has been our purpose clearly to define this task and to seek for the principles and general pattern of the political structure which, according to the ethical conception of justice, should be established in human society. In a sense our aim is merely a beginning. For it confronts us with a number of further questions, the answers to which are beyond the scope of the present work, questions concerned with problems of the application of these principles in the life of society. Among them are first empirical questions about the existing social relations and forces to which the general principles of justice and freedom have to be applied in order to produce concrete ethical demands. Secondly, there are the problems of their realisation, of the measures necessary to ensure their fulfilment.

The present investigation has enabled us to state these problems of realisation and to recognise the direction in which we must seek their solution. One is the problem of the education of political workers who are able and willing to adopt the ideas of right and justice as the guiding principle of their decisions. And the other is the problem of what organisation and structure of political parties, and of the State, is necessary to provide these political workers with the opportunity to bring about social conditions in keeping with these ideals.

Each of these questions requires a thorough investigation of its own, undertaken with the same methods of considera-

tion as we have employed here These further investigations represent the next step towards the realisation of that enterprise from which alone we may expect to overcome the present crisis of human society by the true union of "human morals and enlightened human politics" which will enable us "to place the great inventions of modern technology into the hands of good, decent people in a decent and well-guided social and state organisation"

POLITICS AND ETHICS

By

GRETE HERMANN



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CHAPTER I

A MORAL PROBLEM

THE CRISIS OF OUR TIME

THE economic and political catastrophes of the 20th century are indicative of a more fundamental crisis. Something is radically wrong. Institutions, inventions, discoveries which might have lightened human toil, liberated the capacities of men and enriched the content of life are being used to bewilder, destroy and enslave mankind. Man himself has produced the means whereby in recent decades the devastation of war and the shock of economic crises have attained ever greater dimensions.

The continuous and rapid advance of the natural sciences, of man's technical skill and organising ability have placed in the service of man a power over the forces of nature almost undreamed of a century ago. Distances can now be quickly bridged, goods carried and exchanged all over the world and the fruits of the earth brought forth abundantly for the use and benefit of all. Yet these very achievements have also made it possible for economic crisis to spread from one country to another until almost the entire world has been caught in its grip. Technical progress is largely concentrated on contriving ever more deadly means of destroying human life and goods, and then on competing with these by devising still more deadly counter-weapons. The evil mankind has suffered from man's knowing and mastering the forces of nature by far exceeds everything those blind forces themselves have been able to do.

The dawning recognition of this fact causes widespread

uneasiness to-day When we see the great achievements of human skill and inventiveness being misused to bring us all under an increasing threat of war and starvation, our thoughts turn to the search for a way out of the dilemma

Anxiety is apparent in many of the public discussions on questions of the day and the morrow Scientists and politicians alike reveal their concern For instance, at the Conference held in London in 1941 by the British Association for the Advancement of Science, the discussion turned again and again from the immediate economic, medical, technical and organisational problems of the war and the post-war world to the problem of how the results of scientific research could be safeguarded from abuse, how they could be made a blessing to mankind instead of a curse

Contributions towards a solution of this problem varied in depth of insight The American Ambassador in London, Mr J G. Winant, pointed out that

“ The healing hands of science and the constructive powers of mechanical art are an essential part of any brave new world But they too have to be freed from Nazi power For Nazism has stolen and run amok with the great inventions of free and inquiring minds and is using them not to liberate but to enslave the human spirit ”

It is certainly true that the Nazis succeeded only too well in their efforts to enslave the minds of men, but in what sense can they be accused of having “ stolen ” for this purpose ? Where has there ever been any responsible body which has undertaken to preserve the dangerous weapon of scientific discovery from misuse ? What have scientists, what have democratic governments done to *ensure* that the results of scientific research could not be used for evil purposes ? The discoverer of dynamite founded a Peace Prize, but failed to ensure that control over his discovery was placed in the hands of peace-loving men Democratic governments, claiming to serve the cause of peace and freedom, have permitted the scandal of the international armaments industry to go on unchecked Nor has there been any responsible supervision

of the complicated mechanism of economic institutions. In the hands of men animated by lust for profits or power—and there are others besides Hitler and his associates—technical skill combined with the art of economic organisation has spread chaos, starvation and distress throughout the world. To counter the forces of destruction it is certainly not enough to demand the expiation of the crimes of the Nazis, the exaction of restitution as far as it is possible, and guarantees that Nazi crimes will not occur again.

At the Conference referred to above, the Czech President, Dr E. Benes, went more deeply into the problem. He asserted

“ . . . this is not a problem of technology but a problem of human morals and enlightened human politics. The question is how to place the great inventions of modern technology into the hands of good, decent people in a decent and well-guided social and State organisation.”

The same question applies to other scientific discoveries and inventions, to economic relations and to the vast field of organisation. The handling of them is a problem of morals applied to politics.

THE FAILURE OF LIBERALISM AND MARXISM

There is to-day a call from many quarters to gauge political action by moral or religious principles, in order to find a way out of the crisis which has overtaken our civilisation and culture. What is the significance of this and what does it demand of us?

In the first place we must note the negation implied by this appeal. The old belief, held for generations, that the natural interplay of individual and social forces would, by and large and at any rate in the long run, bring mankind forward and upward, that the misuse of scientific and organisational achievements would be overcome or reduced to ever smaller proportions, is admitted to be a deception, to be misleading and false. There is no such harmony of forces and interests in human society. A serious student of our

times, Paul Tillich, has remarked in his pamphlet *War Arms**

“ The belief in an automatic harmony . which became the informing principle of the political and social structure of occidental society has broken down ”

In the 19th century this belief took two forms, the *laissez-faire* theory of Liberalism and the teaching of Karl Marx

The Liberal theory rested on the assumption that there was a natural balance of interests in society If, therefore, each individual followed his own interests, the good of all would be achieved in the best possible way Every man knows he is dependent on his fellow men for the satisfaction of his interests It follows that he will consider the interests of others even if only on grounds of expediency Each individual has an interest in seeing that the life of society proceeds in a well-regulated, predictable way Consequently, everyone will submit to the law and order maintained by society, thereby voluntarily placing limits on his individual freedom of action.

Karl Marx exposed the fatal error in this theory He showed that the mutual dependence of men on one another is not so fully balanced that each is compelled to respect the interests of others in order not to jeopardise his own Society is split into classes and nations with different degrees of access to the goods of life The contractual relationships existing between members of different classes or nations are not, as Liberalism imagined, the result of a free weighing up of interests resulting in a fair balance On the contrary, these relationships correspond to the given power relationships, they are dictated by those who are economically and politically the stronger, whose only restraint is their fear of provoking counter-forces which they might not be strong enough to overcome. In this struggle the weaker submit, not because the given social relationships appear fair to them, but because submission is the price they must pay for any share in the social product In these circumstances it is no wonder that the diligence and inventiveness of men are not devoted first

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and foremost to the advancement and good of mankind, but to the defence of power positions and the suppression of rivals

The sociological investigations of Marx penetrated deeply into these workings of society. He showed how even morality, religion and cultural achievements come to be misused as weapons in the struggle for positions of economic monopoly. Yet even Marx assumed that the forces working in society would of themselves inevitably sweep away such abuses and bring into existence a social order of a higher form. Certainly the mechanism Marx looked to for this development was no longer the imaginary balance of interests and forces, he knew there was not and never had been any such thing. But he believed that in his analysis of the economic forces in their impact on the social structure he had found the law of the development of society. The "immanent laws of capitalistic production itself," he argues, bring about the centralisation of capital, the conscious technical application of science, the transformation of instruments of individual labour into instruments of labour only usable in common, the entanglement of all peoples in the net of the world market.

"Along with the constantly diminishing number of the magnates of capital who usurp and monopolise all advantages of this process of transformation, grows the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation, but with this, too, grows the revolt of the working class, a class always increasing in numbers, and disciplined, united, organised by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself. The monopoly of capital becomes a fetter upon the mode of production, which has sprung up and flourished along with and under it. Centralisation of the means of production and socialisation of labour at last reach a point where they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. This integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated."*

* Karl Marx · *Capital*, Chapter 24

These prophecies have been as little fulfilled as were those of Liberalism. The misery of the masses has not increased with the accumulation of capital. It has grown gradually less, though certainly it has not been eliminated anywhere. This improvement in the conditions of the masses has not removed class divisions and exploitation, but it has checked the prophesied revolt of the exploited and encouraged the hope that the path of gradual reforms is a better way to attain a just social order than revolutionary struggle with the risks and sacrifices it entails. Many workers soon had more to lose than their chains, and the number grew of those who did not want to risk in a struggle for emancipation the little they had gained.

So the working class has not been driven to inevitable revolt. Neither have members of the possessing classes been driven to mutual slaughter until the last survivors inevitably fall before the revolutionary onslaught of the masses. The possessing classes have shown themselves to be more inventive than Marx foresaw. By means of trusts and other forms of economic organisation, competition between individuals has been brought within limits consistent with the interests of the groups holding the key positions of power. To forestall revolution the possessing groups make certain concessions to the masses and, where these no longer suffice, they hire or permit men lacking all scruples to quell the threat of revolution for them by imposing a system of naked terror.

NO BELIEF IN AN AUTOMATIC HARMONY

It cannot be denied to-day that the forces working in society offer no guarantee of a naturally harmonious and just balance of interests such as Liberalism, in theory at any rate, assumed. Neither do they guarantee the inevitable development of a social order in which class conflicts will disappear, as Marx prophesied.

Yet these old beliefs contain a conviction we cannot afford to discard in our search for a path out of the catastrophes of the 20th century. The representatives of these theories

assumed, often naively and indeed without perceiving the contradiction between their assumption and their otherwise materialist philosophy, that men can distinguish between progressive and retrogressive social developments. They took it for granted that development may tend towards better or worse social relationships, and that this "better" or "worse" is not measured by a standard reflecting the interests of any particular social class but is an objective valuation relating to society as a whole. That is, they assumed the existence of a criterion of value applicable to society.

When these hopes of inevitable progress were wrecked, many men lost their bearings. As experience taught them that the apparently progressive achievements of science, technical skill and organising ability tended to increase the powers of destruction, they not only lost hope of inevitable progress but began also to become doubtful or cynical about the concept of good itself. Peace, justice, human freedom, human dignity appeared to be empty words without relation to reality, at least in the political sphere. Reality meant economic crises and world wars. The tendency of social forces generally does indeed seem to be to increase and extend the danger of these recurring catastrophes. For the trouble does not arise from ignorance of or inability to master the forces of nature, so that progress and better technique might be expected to overcome it, but from the constant conflict between various sectional interests. What can the individual do but seek to save at least his own skin? Each for himself!

Against such an attitude of fatalism stands the protest of Benes and others, the recognition that the problem is moral and political, the problem of placing control of the achievements of science and organisation in the hands of good men.

Everybody who thus demands the reassertion of ethical convictions, the raising of our moral standards, is contributing to the revival of the concept of the good. But we must go further. We must clarify the concept in the light of the discovery that it is a fallacy to believe that society is inevitably evolving towards the good. Does the fact that we reject the inevitability of an upward development compel us to abandon

all the elements in the theory ? Does not the concept of the good itself, as implicit in this theory, provide a fruitful approach to a solution of our difficulty ?

CHAPTER II

EMPIRICAL ETHICS

THE SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH TO ETHICS

MODERN attempts to link up politics with ethical convictions and moral forces can roughly be divided into two groups, according to their basic assumptions

In the one group are those which maintain that the forces on which we can rely must be sought in the capacities of human nature and in the field of social relations. Representatives of this way of thinking draw one conclusion from the disappointments of the past: that progress is not ensured by a natural harmony of forces. They recognise that men by their own efforts must prevent the misuse of the achievements of civilisation, must solve class conflicts and render impossible the catastrophes of war and economic crisis. And it is to the ethical and moral convictions of man himself that they look to inspire and direct the necessary human efforts.

The representatives of the second group have no such confidence in human nature. The fact that the old hopes have proved illusory has confirmed them in their belief that human nature is too weak to secure the triumph of the good. They warn us against putting our trust in human strength and bid us seek allies in the forces and values of a supernatural world.

Let us examine these two attitudes more closely.

With regard to the first it is obviously reasonable to seek among the natural forces shaping social life those capable of overcoming the social catastrophes. This is indeed a primary task for the politician if he wants to influence social conditions

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With regard to the first it is obviously reasonable to seek among the natural forces shaping social life those capable of overcoming the social catastrophes. This is indeed a primary task for the politician if he wants to influence social conditions.

in accordance with his political aim. He must be a realist and study existing conditions and the working of social forces ; he must seek out and strengthen the trends moving in the direction of his goal and eliminate, as far as possible, those tending in an opposite direction. For him to rely on supernatural forces to accomplish what is his own task is equivalent to relinquishing the task, for we only tackle a job in earnest when we depend on ourselves and our own powers.

A typical example of the search for a solution on these lines is the "Excursus on Social Morality" by G. D. H. Cole in his book *Europe, Russia and the Future* (Victor Gollancz, 1941). Cole's argument springs from his conviction that in the absence of a pre-established harmony of interests and social forces, man will work for the betterment of social conditions from his consciousness of moral duty. But wherein lies "betterment" ? What is this sense of "duty," what is the "morally good" ? Cole replies. That which is morally good changes in the course of time. It develops together with and because of the development of scientific knowledge, which is a continual process of widening and deepening our conceptions of the workings of nature. This does not mean that we entirely discard our old ideas and replace them by new ones, but with growing experience we become aware that our conceptions of what happens in nature are only approximate, and that we must re-define and supplement them in the light of new discoveries, without giving up the kernel of truth in the older ideas.

Cole argues that social morality develops in a similar way, through growth of experience. The circle within which moral obligations are felt and recognised gradually expands.

"Moral values . continue, at any rate within any developing civilisation, to accumulate fuller and deeper meanings."

"The realm of morality has no fixed limits. In any advanced community many issues are moral issues to some people and not to others. Hunting animals for sport is an obvious example and eating them is another."

" . it becomes immoral . to cause unnecessary

pain to living creatures "

But there are obstacles to this process of development, and these destroy the hope that the growth of moral forces must inevitably lead to the overcoming of class conflict and to social progress. These obstacles come partly from a "reluctance to accept changes," whether this results from inertia, selfishness, or fear of the unknown and partly from the artificial moral taboos imposed and maintained by a ruling class. These latter are the most dangerous. They stifle healthy development and lead to a "false morality," authoritarian and static, which the ruling classes temporarily uphold. Then, when doubts arise and criticism gains ground, this "false morality" collapses. "True morality" is distinguished from "false" by its capacity for adaptation to changing conditions, for growth leading to increasing recognition of the interests and needs of others.

LIMITS OF THE SOCIOLOGICAL METHOD

The determination of the author to be realistic, to confine himself to facts, is undoubtedly sound. By sticking to experience and sociological research he seeks to discover the nature of the moral sense. Much of his arguments is convincing. In the development of individuals and of society there is just such a growth and extension of the sense of responsibility as Cole describes. Men are increasingly aware that they ought to consider the interests of others besides their own. It is also true that this development is not only hindered by the inertia or selfishness of individuals but is frustrated by social institutions which serve the interests of a privileged section. The result is that the moral standards of a nation either become fixed in a traditional static pattern or are lost in vague, emotional reactions or scepticism.

But do these sociological discoveries help us to answer the question: how can we overcome the social catastrophes of the present day, which have destroyed the old confidence in the natural harmony of interests? Cole clearly expects that moral convictions will lead men to oppose the abuse of the

achievements of civilisation The importance of this investigation lies in the evidence it supplies that such convictions are alive in every society not completely fossilised, and that they function as a progressive force in as far as they are not perverted or crippled by the inertia and cowardice of the human heart, and by the class character of modern society

The limitation "in as far as they are not perverted or crippled" is, however, certainly a warning The forces opposing the effective development of moral convictions have recently shown themselves so strong that these convictions have had no appreciable political power to prevent the onrush of economic crises, fascism and war How can we counter these forces of destruction which themselves actively contribute to the breaking down of man's moral power of resistance ?

Cole gives no clear answer to this question Nor does he expressly pose it Perhaps he is content with the assurance that in almost every society there are men whose moral standards are in advance of their time The individual and social obstacles referred to are not indeed insuperable Some people, by their criticism of existing social relationships and their political demands, attack social privileges sanctioned under the prevailing moral code

But against the hope that such individuals will be a source of such inspiration and strength as to lead to fundamental change in social relationships stands the obstinate fact that the forces of destruction, chaos and demoralisation have gained the upper hand, at any rate in our day The question we have to ask is whether we can change the balance of those forces

Does Cole's investigation help us here ? The evidence he gives that the development of moral convictions is to a certain degree frustrated by opposing forces seems to suggest the need to eliminate these forces. How can it be done ? These opposing forces are the class institutions of society and certain weaknesses in human nature. To remove the first we must destroy the class character of society, that is, we must make the very political change for which we first require to

strengthen moral convictions. The only course open to us, therefore, would be to help those who have kept themselves comparatively free of social prejudices to overcome their inhibitions arising from inertia, cowardice and selfishness. The question then arises. How can these people be induced to struggle against their own selfishness and weakness?

Cole merely says that this effort has to be made in order to gain better, more dependable forces for political progress. But such an appeal will meet with response only from those who accept the purpose of political progress and rate it above personal ease and security. Since there is no natural harmony between social progress and the personal interests of those who struggle for it, determination to join in the struggle can only spring from live moral convictions, in fact from the very convictions which first have to be strengthened by conquering inertia and cowardice. Again we find ourselves arguing in a circle.

This is understandable since Cole confines himself to sociological and psychological research, to the question to what extent are moral convictions active in society to-day and what are the circumstances influencing their content and strength? Such research shows us the forces in nature and society with which we have to reckon, and therefore also the means available for the achievement of our aims, but it does not tell us what aim to choose. The facts elucidated by this investigation cannot provide us with inspiration to choose higher aims, or to struggle harder and be more ready to sacrifice ourselves for a worthy aim. Yet the situation to-day is not that men are confused about means but that there is confusion and irresponsibility in the choice of aims.

Whether an appeal to moral conviction can alter this situation, and if so how, still remains an open question awaiting further investigation. Cole has barred his approach to this problem by equating the morally good with what men deem to be so. Thus for him the question of content is identical with the sociological question. What are the prevailing moral conceptions in a given society and in what direction do they tend to develop? Having established this identity Cole

confines himself to the tested method of examining experience and ignores the more difficult question whether that which men to-day hold to be right and good is really so. This is not a question of facts alone but of values also. It is not simply a question of what is actually happening, what forces are active and in what direction they are tending, but rather of what we think *ought* to happen and what we are to do about it. Only in investigating this question do we discover and clarify our own ethical convictions.

In comparing the development of moral convictions and of the natural sciences Cole might have realised that he was missing the decisive point. The continuous advance of the natural sciences is due to the very fact that investigators have distinguished between what actually happens in nature, and the generally accepted notions and convictions about these happenings. Only by making this distinction can they maintain a critical attitude towards the accepted beliefs of their day, and so advance towards the truth. A similar incentive to clarify and deepen the prevailing moral and cultural conceptions, and thus to strengthen their influence on the social life, can only spring from the critical question whether these prevailing conceptions are right, whether they are closely enough related to the life of society, or whether they ignore or misrepresent certain essential points of view. Once we pose this question we have to go beyond the mere statement and explanation of facts, we have to deal with values. At this point the empirical method fails us.

NATURAL SYMPATHY AND ENLIGHTENED SELF-INTEREST NO SAFEGUARD

Other attempts to treat ethics as a part of natural science go a step further than that of Cole though they too stick to the realm of factual knowledge and avoid the field of values. They tackle the question: what are the interests that tend to develop moral conceptions, in genuine, widening correspondence with changing social relationships? Though these investigations confine themselves to the field of factual

knowledge they seem to indicate the means we seek whereby we can mobilise forces against chaos, crises and war. For it might be argued that men have interests tending to develop their moral convictions, just as they have an interest in extending their experience, at any rate in so far as they derive advantage thereby. If so, by appealing to these interests it should be possible to clarify, deepen and strengthen their understanding of moral values, even without tackling the difficult problem of what good is in itself, as distinct from what men in particular circumstances and particular periods have deemed it to be.

What kind of interests could these be? Different answers have been given. The simplest appears to be that an appeal can be made to sympathy and compassion, for these are emotions which lead men to concern themselves with the interests of their fellows. The sight of the joy or sorrow of others may arouse similar feelings in us and give us an interest in seeing their interests satisfied.

But sympathy certainly cannot be an adequate source of the energy required for the struggle against the social chaos of our time. It does not necessarily and permanently link our interests with those of others. In the first place sympathy can only be aroused in so far as the joy or sorrow of others is visible to the eye, and appeals to our emotion. Our sympathy and readiness to stand by those who are suffering injustice is weakened by the actual and emotional distance which separates us from their suffering. Again, emotions become dulled through familiarity with suffering, and are held in check by the conflict between self-interest and the interests of others. If, in order to overcome these obstacles, the intensity and frequency of the appeal were increased it might be effective, though only if the sacrifice required were not too great. Even so, the obstacles of dulled emotions and conflicting interests cannot be permanently overcome in this way. We have to look for some more reliable motive.

Is it possible, as is sometimes argued, for this force to develop out of the accumulation of experiences of the generations since the earliest communities were formed,

experiences which have taught the mutual dependence of men and the consequent interest of each in doing as he would be done by ? Without making a detailed analysis of the various theories which look to such experience and interests to explain the growth of moral convictions, theories which vary in form according to the social outlook of their representatives, we find in all a common underlying assumption. It is that men have an interest in orderly intercourse with one another, *i.e.* in "law and order," by which, of course, everybody means a law and order within which his own interests are allowed as much free play as possible. Without law and order it would be futile to plan any course of action. Such action is almost always bound to affect the interests of others, and in the possible conflict these may nullify the intentions of the planner. Rather than allow a struggle for power to ensue on each occasion, reducing society to a state of chronic chaos, men find it better to seek a *modus vivendi*, to establish the field of rights and duties for all, to secure to each his rights and hold him to his duties. The idea that social intercourse should be regulated in this way, that everyone should respect the rules, and that if he does not the power of the State should compel him to conform to them, appears to guarantee a society in which each will be able to pursue his aims without the interference of unpredictable happenings.

We need not at this point consider how these theories attempt to explain the development of moral convictions, which imply higher standards than the advantage of the individual, out of considerations of expediency alone. There still remains the question whether this common interest in law and order is strong enough to ensure that rights and duties will be respected by all, and the laws of the land obeyed. Admittedly, our readiness to accept our duties and obey the law is largely due to the existence of this common interest. If we want to enjoy the advantages of an orderly society we cannot completely ignore the demands it makes on us, especially where others are concerned on whom we are dependent for the achievement of our aims. Thus the average man everywhere fits himself into society, obeys the

traffic regulations, pays his taxes and keeps to the law of the land. He does this, not only because otherwise he would be punished, but because in spite of his criticism of one thing or another, in spite of occasional limited protests, he accepts the system, and knows he will get along best if he avoids conflict with it.

The peace of the world and human progress, however, cannot be entrusted to such considerations of mere expediency. To rely on them or to appeal to them is utterly absurd in the light of recent happenings. A classical example is Norman Angell's book, *The Great Illusion*, published in 1911. The author argued that in modern conditions war is no less a calamity for the victor than for the vanquished, war is no longer profitable, therefore it will disappear. History has given the answer to this "illusion." The argument overlooked the fact that though war brings misery to the common people everywhere it may be very profitable to certain sections of society. The armaments industry thrives on war. The big landowners in Germany lived by a tariff system which brought untold hardship to a majority of the people, and would never have been tolerated without the excuse of the danger of war. The imperialistic lust for power can only be satisfied by war, and those who have this craving are ready to risk their own fate and that of all mankind to get their way.

Admittedly such men are few compared with the number who suffer from their unscrupulous activities. A German industrialist once estimated there were only a few hundred of them. It is an old problem why the greater part of society puts up with these monsters instead of uniting to overthrow them. Cannot the interest of each individual in a stable and ordered society be mobilised for such an obviously beneficial purpose? To believe this would again be to fall into illusion. Hitler's strategy, like that of all power politicians, was always to play off his opponents one against the other, both within his own country and outside it. Divide and rule! The success of this ancient strategy shows that the average man is content to take the line of least resistance, to adapt him-

self to familiar facts even though they be unpleasant, rather than to jeopardise his safety for the sake of mankind by taking the dangerous path of protest and struggle against the powerful few

There are many other theories that seek to establish man's interest in the development of moral behaviour and convictions, they owe their origin to modern psychological research. It has been shown that human instincts and interests, when not distorted or repressed, develop more and more in the direction of a conscious guidance of the psychological behaviour. In the course of this development man learns to co-ordinate his impulses into a conception of what is worth striving for beyond the moment. He becomes accustomed to restraining his desires and to considering whether he will satisfy them or not, according as they harmonise with his other interests and his scale of values. Where this development is not free, but hampered by difficulties with which the adolescent cannot cope, illnesses develop which cripple the full unfolding of his energies and capacities. Such illnesses and frustrations appear as self-centredness, as phobias, as destructive impulses, as a hunger for appreciation born of inner insecurity. A healthy life, it is argued, requires that men should share in the life of others, should set themselves an ideal aim for which they will struggle and, if need be, make sacrifices.

Here we find an old conception in a new form, the belief that what is bad in society can be explained as a kind of sickness, and that to cure this sickness it is necessary only to appeal to the natural interest of every man in the healthy development of his personality. By pointing to this interest, the satisfaction of which involves taking a positive attitude to society, this school of thought believes it has avoided the objection to reliance on mere self-interest.

In fact, this explanation does not take us a step further, it repeats the old mistakes. We cannot take it for granted that men regard the healthy, many-sided development of personality as their paramount interest, so that they need only be shown what is necessary for health and they will

do it This is true no more of mental than of physical health. In neither case is there any law of nature to prevent a man endangering his health by carelessness or lack of self-control. Moreover, even a healthily developed personality is not necessarily associated with an adequate sense of duty. The claims of duty may indeed interfere with the harmonious development of his own personality. Those who make the latter their prime consideration will certainly not be fitted to play their part in the present struggle for justice and peace. In other words, an interest in the development of personality does not necessarily lead to the development of moral strength, which alone can end the abuse of man's achievements and capacities.

THE DILEMMA OF EMPIRICAL ETHICS

We have come to a strange result. The old illusion of inevitable progress enters, in one way or another, into all the theories we have examined. Even though the illusion is described as false or misleading in most of them, it appears in a new guise apparently supported by facts taken from experience. What is the reason for this recurring illusion?

Let us state again the problem these theories seek to solve. The experiences of our day have shown that the subjective factor plays a more important part in the life of society than was recognised in the 19th century, neither economic nor any other social factor gives us any guarantee of social progress, even in the long run, whether progressive or reactionary ideas win the upper hand in any period depends upon what men decide is worth struggling for. The question then arises: how can the human will be moved to fight for and to establish just and peaceful social conditions? Moral convictions are looked to as the required spur to the human will, and therefore the investigations of sociologists and psychologists are directed towards testing and establishing this claim. The forces acting on the will are examined with a view to answering the question whether man's interest in peace, justice and social progress is, or is becoming, strong

enough to overcome the opposing interests. Only if this last question can be answered in the affirmative can we regard these investigations as indicating the way forward out of the catastrophes of our day. But it cannot be so answered. No law of nature ensures victory to the good, in this case to the forces favourable to progress. The old belief in inevitable progress has been destroyed by experience. This is admitted. And yet the moral forces, combined with considerations of expediency, are now substituted and regarded as a guarantee of progress. There is a contradiction here. It leads us again to the old optimistic faith which the newer theories claim to have superseded.

Wherein lies the error? Certainly not in examining man's experiences to learn more about the development of moral conceptions. Any unprejudiced person who sets himself the task of examining experience will discover the correctness of many of the observations on which these theories are based. He will be able to trace the rise of moral conceptions in the early, simple forms of communal life and see how they develop hand in hand with the changing forms of social life and custom, how they gradually become wider and deeper or harden into a dogmatic code. He will be able to investigate the influence of other interests on this process and will find that consideration for the interests of others, appreciation of the values of peaceful intercourse and desire for a full and varied life, all play a part.

But he will also find that the capacity to develop moral conceptions is only one side of human nature, and not by any means invariably the strongest. Other interests frequently dominate, other impulses or considerations of expediency. A still greater danger lies in the fact that moral conceptions grow gradually out of more or less vague emotional responses and are liable to be influenced by environment. Thus they may become an instrument of reaction. Marx saw clearly that the ideas prevailing in any society are largely those of the ruling class. In short, we find that man's capacity to form moral conceptions determining the aims of his society is no more immune from abuse than any other human capacity.

It may become dormant or be directed away from the real sources of social injustice into other channels. Moreover, it can be exploited in the mobilisation of fanatical devotion to evil political purposes. The appalling extent to which such a mobilisation can be carried through is illustrated in our own day by the influence Hitler gained over a population reduced to despair and ruin by war and economic crisis, especially over the young people, who grew up in a chaotic, distracted world. Hitler's influence was due to his unscrupulous skill in playing on all sides of human nature. His appeal was directed not only to the baser impulses, to sadism, lust for power and self-assertion, but also to the spirit of service and self-sacrifice for the nation, to the desire of youth to fight in the cause of justice. Had it not been for this satanic method of appealing to the generous emotions of young people, Hitler could never have won over large numbers of young Germans for the extravagances of his so-called "dynamic" policy.

We come back to the starting point of our problem. The capacities and achievements of man, which could make life richer and more secure, can be abused and become a curse instead of a blessing. This is true even of the force we hope will lead us out of the crisis, namely man's capacity to develop moral conceptions and to place these above the claims of self-interest and personal satisfaction.

Are we then bound to conclude that in looking to the moral convictions we are again deceiving ourselves and returning to the old illusion of inevitable social progress? If our investigation were simply a matter of re-examining the forces working in society, in the hope of finding, after all, some force that would guarantee inevitable progress, then we should indeed be falling into the old error. Experience, when we appeal to it, shows the unprejudiced investigator that moral convictions, like every other force working in society, have their limitations, and can be repressed or distorted by a stronger counterforce. The result of the interplay of forces depends on circumstances in every period, and from these investigations it is not possible to declare what trend will, in the long run, prevail.

But suggestions such as that made by Benes, that security against the abuse of man's capacities and achievements is not a technical but a moral problem, do not compel us to confine ourselves to the study of experience. The suggestion implies that we need a greater sense of responsibility in dealing with the achievements of science and organisational ability. And this directs our attention to the purposes which these achievements should be made to serve. A sense of responsibility can only be based on a clear, reasoned opinion about these purposes, about what is good, the values that should be realised in society. If we are to turn to ethics to guide us we have to ask ourselves what is the good we must seek, we must not confine ourselves to learning what sociology and psychology show us that men in particular periods have deemed good. We have to consider what contribution we ourselves should make to the realisation in society of that which is good, we must not limit ourselves to what men have done in the past or are doing to-day.

CHAPTER III

CHRISTIAN ETHICS

RELIANCE UPON DIVINE GUIDANCE

CHRISTIAN ethics places in the forefront a thought which empiricists tend to ignore or disregard—that the nature of man and society does not in itself provide a safeguard against the use of social forces to bring death and destruction rather than a more abundant life. In discussing the appeal to ethics made by the empiricists, Christian thinkers show clearly this orientation of thought.

J. Middleton Murry, for instance, in his book *The Defence of Democracy* (Jonathan Cape, 1929), discusses the political and social problems of our day in the light of a critical appreciation of the Marxist standpoint. He himself has much in common with the Marxist approach though he is a Christian. He does not reject Marx's criticisms of religion and the Churches. He recognises the validity of the reproach that in the period of early Capitalism and the rise of a new ruling class, the majority of the Church leaders supported that class and formed one of the main instruments by which its ideas became the prevailing ideas in society.

Murry also largely agrees with the Marxian analysis of society, though his interpretation would be indignantly rejected by most Marxists, and would probably have been repudiated by Marx himself. He accepts the argument of Marx that the life of society follows a law of development leading it to ever higher forms. Man takes part in this development though he has not planned it and cannot frustrate it.

Yet he is not merely a passive agent, drawn in by some superior power. He actively assists and co-operates. The incentive is either that men suffer so acutely under social conditions that they are driven to struggle against them for survival or that, as students of society, they gain insight into the process of social change and seek to strengthen the progressive forces, determined not only to explain the world but to change it, in accordance with its own laws of development.

This attitude of the student of society to place himself on the side of the oppressed and identify himself with their struggle is, in Murry's view, the consequence of a religious and ethical interpretation of history, as he himself accepts it. For religion, to Murry, is the recognition of a "divine pattern" in human history, and the ethical attitude would be that of a man who fitted himself into this pattern.

In the later development of Marxist teaching, especially in what he calls Marx-Leninism, Murry sees a falsification of Marx's earlier view of history, the basically religio-ethical approach is abandoned and replaced by a materialist outlook. This has come about, he argues, through concentration on the economic forces, alleged to be the only agencies in the historical process. It does not matter in this connection that the materialist outlook is more deeply rooted in the teaching of Marx than Murry believes. For our purpose it is more important to see how far Murry agrees with Marx's interpretation of history, and where he departs from it. He denounces as a fallacy the Marxian prediction that the workers will inevitably be driven to revolt by the action and interaction of the natural, economic forces. Since the revolt of the workers is not inevitable there remains only the second part of the prophecy—that men anxiously acknowledge the divine pattern revealed in history and fit themselves into it. This, in Murry's view, gives the Marxist interpretation of history that special religious character which is clearly reflected in its political and economic conclusions. In seeking to fit himself into the divine pattern, man definitely goes beyond the sphere of decisions towards which his own interests would have directed him. Thus, argues Murry, he has to grow beyond himself, and the

strength to do so cannot come from within, but has to be gained from his understanding of a divine pattern greater than himself

In the Christian contribution to the discussion of politics and social problems, we always meet the conception that human society can only advance towards the good if men fit themselves into the divine pattern by obeying God's will. Thus, the late Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr William Temple, wrote in his booklet, *Christianity and Social Order* (Penguin, 1942) that standards of social life determined by men according to their individual aims and powers are insufficient to overcome the catastrophes of our day because every effort based on human strength alone is subject to the curse of original sin. Original sin, according to Dr. Temple, is the centring of Man's desires and valuations on himself

"Our standard of value is the way things affect ourselves. So each of us takes his place in the centre of his own world. But I am not the centre of the world or the standard of reference as between good and bad, I am not, and God is. In other words, from the beginning I put myself in God's place. This is my original sin."

And again.

"Education may make my self-centredness less disastrous by widening my horizon of interest while leaving me still the centre and standard of reference. Education may do more than this if it succeeds in winning me into devotion to truth or to beauty, that devotion may win a partial deliverance from self-centredness. But complete deliverance can be effected only by the winning of my whole heart's devotion, the total allegiance of my will—and this only the Divine Love disclosed by Christ in His Life and Death can do."

Man's aim must be to obey the laws of God. All other aims are influenced by man's subjective convictions and interests. According to this teaching, the understanding of God's will and the readiness to obey His commandments is not only the guide but the source of the power that enables people to resist the forces making for destruction

LACK OF A CLEAR POLITICAL OUTLOOK

This Christian ethic definitely rejects the illusion that the interaction of the natural forces in society is sufficient in itself to bring about the good. Moreover, with regard to good and evil it holds firmly to a standard of reference without attempting to derive this standard merely from the course of events. There is no mistaking the fact that men may hold certain things to be good, or at any rate permissible, which do not merit being so regarded, and that therefore constant watchfulness over ourselves and our social environment is needed.

Instead of looking to experience, to sociology, psychology or economics, the Christian ethic relies on a supernatural ordering of events, a divine plan for mankind, with which man can and shall comply in obedience to the laws of God. But this involves giving up the realist attitude rightly adopted by the empiricists, who look to the world of experience to guide them in choosing their goal, and who rely only on the forces they find active in the world of experience. The politician who takes the Christian ethic as his guide has to rely on a supernatural world he *believes* to exist, not on the world of nature he knows from experience, and in which he has to act.

A realistic and progressive policy which takes account of the changing conditions and social relationships within a given society must be related to the world of experience. Neither in determining the long-term goal nor in choosing immediate means towards its achievement can the world of experience be disregarded. Only by basing himself firmly on experience can the politician ensure that his immediate plans will serve to bring about a better order, and not merely to create new power positions which will but aggravate the conflict between individuals or classes or nations. Moreover, only experience will help him to decide how far the forces available can be mobilised to solve the tasks on hand.

Thus there is an unbridgeable gap between the effort to solve our problems by using knowledge gained from experience and the assumption that it is by trusting obedience to divine

revelation that man would best serve God's plans, and in his turn receive the support of supernatural divine forces

Few Christians, however, who are serious about their faith in an Almighty God, accept without reservation their responsibility for carrying out the divine plan. Karl Barth, in *A Letter to Great Britain from Switzerland* (written in 1940¹) bases his political attitude on the Christian faith. Yet he writes

"It cannot be our job to fight God's battle against His enemies, since that battle has already been fought and won on the cross of Golgotha. And further it will become clear to us that it is not up to us to defend or extend the Kingdom of God by this war since the Kingdom will come of itself in Jesus Christ, when His hour comes, without our assistance, political or otherwise . . . A further practical consequence . . . it is not necessary for us or for others to busy ourselves about plans and pictures of the economic and social, national and international, and, lastly, religious conditions in the new order which must be established after this war. We shall not set our hearts on such 'peace aims'. There is no reason why we should not dream about such 'peace aims' as occasion offers. But we shall always remember that we cannot do more than dream about these things."

In its own way this is logical. The religious faith that history is shaped by the will of God cannot lead men to set themselves clear and compelling ethico-political aims. Barth's conclusions show where the attempt to base ethics and politics on a Christian religious conception will logically take us. It involves renunciation of our ethical task. It leads to a shameful indolence regarding the fight for peace and a better social order. Barth is not entirely consistent, for he declared it to be the duty of Christians to support the war against Hitler as their contribution towards winning God's battle, a battle which he said was already won.

CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND CHRISTIAN POLITICS

Other writers on Christian ethics and a political policy based on Christian principles go further than Barth Middleton Murry and Willham Temple, in the books to which reference has been made, demand of themselves and their fellow-believers decisions on the questions facing society to-day. But how do they bridge the gulf between the natural world with its conflict of finite forces and the plans of an Almighty God, who cannot possibly be dependent upon the assistance of his finite creatures ?

The gulf is clearly revealed in the conclusions drawn by Temple. He distinguishes sharply between the Christian social principles, which all Christians must accept, and the particular criticisms and reforms of existing social institutions by individual Christians like himself. He maintains that the formulation of social and political programmes is not part of Church teaching and the Christian faith. The Churches cannot bind themselves to follow any particular political policy. There is no Christian ideal of society. An attempt to depict and set up a fixed Ideal State would end in sterile doctrinairism for it would bear no relation to changing conditions. Christianity has a more valuable service to render than drawing ideal pictures. It sets forth certain principles with reference to which we can judge social relationships, and which should be our guide in making decisions. But the detailed application of these principles requires a technical knowledge and skill which belong entirely to the natural world. It is therefore not the task of the Churches, whose work lies in teaching the doctrines and ethical principles of the Christian faith. The Churches must leave the application of these principles to those who have the necessary special knowledge, and must therefore refrain from drawing up political programmes. Their influence on public life is confined to training their members in a sense of moral responsibility according to the Christian meaning of the words, and to calling on men to interpret their rights and duties as citizens in the light of the Christian teaching.

It is true that social and political patterns fixed in every detail, prescribing once and for all how social and human relationships should be organised, must necessarily degenerate into a distorted picture of the fundamental idea as they do not take account of changing conditions. Dr Temple is right. We have to give up the idea of such an unalterable pattern and look for some principles of a more general nature. Such principles would not point to concrete demands unless applied to given circumstances. This means that the demands made in any particular case will vary according to existing social conditions, and different circumstances will require different measures to deal with them. To find out what is required in any particular case we need more than principles, we have to investigate existing social conditions and know the dominant forces, and this knowledge we cannot get from ethical principles but from experience.

So far so good. Does it imply that the Churches, which claim to teach mankind the basic ethical principles, can and ought to refrain from determining how those principles should be applied in any given set of circumstances? Does it follow that because the Christian doctrine does not suffice for this purpose, the application of Christian principles must be left to the decision of those experts who have the required knowledge of social and political conditions? Surely Churches which claim to teach the principles by which men must judge and influence the social order cannot disclaim responsibility for acquiring the knowledge which will enable them to understand the practical consequences of their teaching.

The Roman Catholic Church has gone furthest towards codifying such consequences, for instance in the papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, which contains Leo XIII's guiding principles for a social policy on Roman Catholic lines. These attempts, however, are far from setting a clear political line which would be binding on every member of the Church. The Church does not even go to the trouble of holding the official exponents of its doctrine—the clergy—to a universal and unequivocal political attitude. Far from it, it has even benefited from the inclusion in its ranks of men adhering to

most contradictory political opinions.

Here we are faced with an unavoidable alternative either the principles taught by the Churches are so definite and unambiguous as to entail the raising of certain social and political demands wherever they are applied to given social conditions, or they are not so definite. If they are, to adopt these principles means to accept the task of always applying them to given circumstances, seeking what they require of us and making sure it is carried out. No Church can expect to be taken seriously unless on the basis of its teachings it lays down the unavoidable social consequences for any given set of conditions. The Church, teaching these principles, cannot confine itself to communicating them to its members and urging them to live accordingly.

But if Church teaching is not so definite, it cannot be a standard of reference to which men turn for guidance in any and every situation, as Temple claims. Here we must anticipate a misunderstanding often encountered. To deny the ability of the Churches to provide such a standard is not to deny the sincerity and depth of the religious ideas underlying such teaching. It is to deny the possibility of basing ethical and political convictions on religious principles. If we want an ethical foundation for our political judgments and decisions it is to another sphere of values that we must look.

THE DANGERS OF POLITICAL CHRISTIANITY

Those who approach the problems facing society to-day from the standpoint of Christian ethics cannot escape this alternative either they must stand for a political Christianity or they must look elsewhere for guidance in forming their political judgments. Yet there is hardly a single leading representative of the Christian ethical teaching who accepts either alternative unreservedly.

In course of time the claims of a political Christianity have become to a great extent discredited. Rightly so, for they led logically to the State's acting as the secular arm of the Church, thus recognising the divinely inspired Church as the

supreme authority on political matters. Wherever this claim is made the guiding principle of political action—as it was, for instance, by mediaeval Catholicism or by Calvin's Church State—man's freedom to use his own understanding in shaping his own life and contributing to shaping the life of society is virtually curtailed. As the political trustees of the divine purpose—so inaccessible to man's enquiring mind—the Churches cannot but refer to divine revelation which has to be explained and applied by the Churches and their appointed officers.

This claim of political Christianity would keep mankind perpetually in leading-strings. It has long been rejected by progressive people. In its earlier extreme form it is hardly put forward to-day, at any rate not openly. But the Christian Churches have certainly not refrained from exercising political influence. The Vatican, in particular, continues to be an important factor in power politics. The policy pursued by the official head of the Catholic Church in recent years has helped to nourish the mistrust of Christian influence in politics. From the rise of Fascism onwards, the Vatican has made concordats with Mussolini and Hitler, taken sides in the Spanish civil war against the progressive forces, supported the men who betrayed France to Hitler. The Vatican has a sorry record of pacts made with the forces that have subjected men to slavery. Even the opposition to National Socialism by the Catholic and Protestant Churches in Germany, despite the courage, self-sacrifice and idealism of individuals, bears traces of these shady political connections. The resistance of these Churches did not begin until they themselves were attacked, and even then was confined to the defence of their own interests. Only in a few cases did local Churchmen protest against the persecution of Jews and Socialists in the Third Reich. Pastor Niemöller, the martyr of the Confessional Church, closes his book *Vom U Boot zur Kanzel** with expressions of gratitude "for the tremendous work of national uplift and unification which has begun

* An English translation appeared in 1936. *From U-Boat to Pulpit* (publisher Hodges)

amongst us." That book was written in 1934, that is *after* the burning of the Reichstag and the setting up of concentration camps

Another example is that of the Archbishop of Muenster, von Gahlen, who during the present war had the courage to protest from the pulpit against Nāzi methods, but he concentrated on reproaching the Nazis for having expropriated Church funds and Church organisations and for having raised unfounded allegations against priests, monks and nuns whom they had arrested and imprisoned, and otherwise prevented from carrying out their religious duties

Experiences of this kind have led many thoughtful Christians to conclude that the Churches should refrain from active participation in political affairs lest they be tempted to strive for political power. In their view the Churches stand for the Kingdom of God, whose realm is not of this world. Therefore they should not attempt to define a Christian policy for the conduct of worldly affairs. Such considerations may explain why Temple, Murry and many others regard the work of the Church as limited to the proclaiming of the divine message and the teaching of Christian ethics, the attempt to foster the spiritual side of human nature and to influence people to interpret in the light of Christian teaching their rights and duties as citizens

Yet they are far from drawing the conclusion which follows from the decisive rejection of these political claims. This conclusion would be that reference to God's will does not provide dependable political principles which are clear and unambiguous. To be dependable such principles have to be accessible to man's reason and criticism. If they are to be found at all, it can only be by way of an immediate ethical conviction related to the kind of social life we know from experience

CHAPTER IV

ETHICAL REALISM

CAUSALITY AND PURPOSEFUL ACTION

WE have seen that two things have constantly to be kept in mind. Both schools of thought we have dealt with in the previous pages acknowledge one of them but ignore the other. Firstly, we must be careful to maintain a secure footing in the realm of experience. We cannot borrow our criterion of the good, our standard of reference in making political judgments and determining our aim, from a supernatural reality, allegedly more perfect and higher than that which we know in the realm of experience. Nor can we mobilise in the service of our aim any other than the natural forces we know from experience, shaping the life of society. Secondly, we must break with the old illusion that these natural forces, of themselves, will lead to the good. We do not make this belief less illusory simply by including ethical convictions in the sum of the active social forces. Certainly these convictions are among the social forces, but no law of nature guarantees that they cannot be overpowered by counter-forces or, worse still, distorted or abused.

It is not surprising that the two attempts to relate ethics and politics so far examined do not escape one or the other of these pitfalls. For how are both to be avoided? The refusal to seek among the social forces, known to experience, for a guarantee that the good will automatically be brought about, apparently only leaves the way open to look elsewhere for support, and to seek there a criterion of the good. On the

other hand, if we realistically confine ourselves to the realm of experience, what is to be the basis of our confidence that human society can advance out of the cycle of crises and wars if not the hope that the social forces and powers of nature might be favourable to such progress ?

We cannot avoid the dilemma so long as we look at the world of experience solely with the eyes of the natural scientist, studying the laws of cause and effect in the sequence of events. Certainly, in itself, this scientific method is sound and can be applied in all fields of experience. It is indispensable in shaping social relationships. To do this we need soberly to evaluate the sociological, psychological, economic and technical factors with which we are confronted. Yet the most competent computation on these lines carries with it no guarantee that we shall achieve our aim. What it does is to show the energetic and determined man where his opportunities lie. All then depends on whether there is such energy and determination available, and if so whether they are used to secure peace, justice and liberty, or alternatively are devoted to personal or sectional ends to which the good of mankind is sacrificed.

We can, of course, approach this question too by studying cause and effect in the interaction of the social forces. But such an investigation only *interprets* the crisis of our time, and in certain circumstances may actually impede the task of ending the crisis and of *changing* the world. If we could do no more than make this kind of analysis, any attempt to look to ethics as a guide out of the chaos of our day would be hopeless from the start.

Certain modern scientific theories, especially those concerned with society, do in fact incline to recognise only this one approach, and regard any other as utopian or unscientific. Yet nobody accepts this attitude in daily life. Carried to its logical conclusion it would make us regard all that happens through or to us as part of a mechanical process in which truth and error, anarchy and order, the creation and destruction of values, are left to the chance disposition of forces. However such an attitude of fatalism may be defended in

theory, it breaks down whenever we take considered action even in the smallest matters

In taking considered action we behave in a way which we deem good, and we deliberately try to avoid making mistakes. We are acting on the assumption that what we strive for is not a matter of mere chance. What we consider is whether the opinions and decisions before us deserve preference. We consider whether there are reasons for us to assume that these opinions are right, and that these decisions will serve our purpose. Such reasons may, of course, be based on either emotional or more or less clearly thought-out notions.

Thus the fact that we are able to control our thoughts and deeds reveals a connection between events other than the one of cause and effect. Our ability to base thought and action on certain grounds makes it possible for us to avoid mistakes, discover truth and create values, and thus escape being at the mercy of chance. There is no causal connection between events whereby without fail truth comes to light and that which is good is achieved. But the thinking, reasoning human being can work systematically to discover truth and bring about what he conceives to be good.

Admittedly this relationship to the true and good, basic to a well-considered decision, is rarely found in a clear, unmistakable form. Human thinking struggles with the temptation to take short cuts, and it indulges in prejudice or escapism, and thus decisions may often be to a greater or less extent the outcome of wishful thinking. Moreover, the rational choice of ends and means is mixed with emotional reactions to environmental influences, so that even where a particular aim is firmly upheld in face of opposition, it is not necessarily an aim that has been thoroughly considered. We can only speak of a well-considered aim where thought has been given to the question whether it is worthy of the effort and sacrifice required to achieve it, and is not dictated by selfish desire, greed or fanatical superstition. Knowledge and error, consideration and greed or selfishness exist side by side, and this accounts for the fact that the achievements of science, technology and organisation often become instruments of

destruction, and that wars and crises attain a magnitude more terrible than any catastrophes in Nature.

In face of these experiences we are too apt to ignore our capacity to reason, our capacity to escape from blind chance by considering whether we are thinking rightly and acting wisely. So it is understandable that in our attempts to find a way out of the social catastrophes of our day, we fall back again and again on analyses of existing social forces in the vague hope that, by their interaction, evil will in the long run be overcome, or else we cling to a religious faith that a more perfect, purer will than that of man is guiding the course of history, and that in submission to this lies our hope of deliverance.

But experience teaches us that the interaction of the natural forces in society is not determined by standards of value. The stronger force prevails, and whether under given circumstances values are created, maintained or destroyed is a matter of chance. This does not alter the fact that man has the capacity to seek truth and wisdom, in other words, to refer his decisions to standards of value. The capacity is there, but whether and to what extent it is used to decide which of his desires and plans are worthy of pursuit is not determined by any law of nature, its use can only be developed by the considered decision of men and women conscious of their responsibility.

Thus there is only one way out of the chaos of our day - we must grasp the fact that man is able to take such considered decisions, and we must see to it that such decisions are taken, and that political influence is secured for those who take them.

This brings us to the point where we can see what ethics has to contribute to the shaping of an enlightened and realistic policy. We need well-considered decisions as to the ends worth striving for in the social relationships within and between nations as to how progress or retrogression in the development of these relationships can be measured, and as to the criteria by which politicians, conscious of their responsibility, are to judge their conduct of affairs.

The question is not what do some individuals or what do the majority consider good ? The question is, what is the criterion of what is good for society ? This is the distinction between the real ethical problems and the empirical questions investigated by those whose concern is only to discover the forces that have prevailed in changing social conditions. The empiricists' claim that their method fulfils the demand of realism is not valid, for they ignore an essential factor in the world of experience. The truth is that we do not judge natural events only by the gauge of cause and effect, but measure them with standards of value and, to however limited an extent, try to achieve something in accordance with these standards. The task of ethics is to clarify and ratify the standards which in practice we act upon. It must be remembered, however, that though they prompt action, they by no means automatically and openly govern it. Unless they are clarified, they remain clouded by error or egotism or, more dangerous still, by prejudices fostered by the social order.

Thus in passing from the factual question, what men actually deem good, to the ethical one, what is the good we ought to strive for in the life of society, we are not forsaking the realist attitude. We accept the fact that our political aims must be related to existing social relationships and that the social forces we have to utilise are those known to the world of experience. The value of judgments we have to clarify to find the standards to which they refer is expressed more or less dimly or confusedly in our deliberate actions. The criterion we seek is that to which reason refers when we consider events in nature or society and try to influence them. We are not bound to look for this criterion in some revelation of a divine will superior to Nature and to man's understanding.

THE PROBLEM OF FREE WILL

Certain fundamental difficulties may be raised to show there can be no such connection between ethics and politics as we here claim is necessary, that the theory of ethics put

forward is itself impracticable, and that an attempt to relate ethics and politics is therefore utopian and bound to fail.

The first difficulty lies in the question whether the two methods of investigation to which we have referred can really be used side by side, or whether one is a contradiction of the other. Is the realist view that the political life of society, like the physical world, is dominated by the stronger force compatible with the conviction that we are capable of influencing political developments in the direction we regard as good ?

Here we come to the old problem of free will. In the political field doubts about free will are expressed in an attitude of fatalism, in the conviction that in the last resort the course of events is determined by great social forces on which the attitude of individuals has very little effect, even where individuals appear to play a part they are only the product and expression of existing social conditions. This view is sound enough in that the natural law of cause and effect can be traced in the political as in other fields. The outbreak of wars and crises, the policies of the Big Powers or of individual politicians or political groups, can be explained by analysing the forces, interests and relationships which have brought about this or that political development. The more thorough the analysis, the more clearly can further developments be foreseen. This possibility of prediction seems to rule out the task of influencing towards the recognised good the direction in which events are moving. It appears to be accidental whether and how far the actual tendencies observed further or frustrate our ethical conceptions of what ought to be. We have seen plainly enough in our own day how this element of chance may defeat the cause of peace, liberty and cultural advance.

It would take us too far afield to go thoroughly into this real difficulty. But we certainly do not get rid of it by taking a fatalist attitude, by limiting ourselves to observation, explanation and prophecy, in fact such an attitude is not even consistent. Close observation will reveal in the very question from which we started the two methods of investigation which

we have found . the one setting out to explain the causal connection and the other valuing and selecting The question itself resulted from the observation that, if they are used for selfish purposes, man's skill and inventiveness can easily become fatal to the great goods of mankind, peace, justice and freedom Wherever man acts with diligence and inventiveness, his may certainly be called a considered action He is confident that he can influence the processes in his own mind and in the external world so as to fit them to his purpose, which is to acquire a clear and well-founded idea of what is happening, and to achieve what he deems to be good. It is true that his purposes may spring from base, unworthy ambitions, in which case he may use his achievements for anti-social ends. But it would be wrong to conclude from this possibility of a misuse of his gifts that man is incapable of deliberately choosing and directing his course of action In our struggles against obstacles and opposition, we distinguish clearly between those due to the blind forces of Nature, such as earthquakes and floods, and those which are the work of other wills that deliberately frustrate our plans

Anyone who claims that the law of causality rules out the possibility of man's effective intervention in the political field for the purpose of bringing about what he conceives to be good therewith rejects the question from which we set out, and ignores the facts of experience which thrust this question upon us

Inveterate sceptics try to get out of this difficulty by interpreting all human achievements and their use or misuse exclusively in terms of causal relationships To be consistent, they would have to regard the idea that man is capable of considered action as a mere illusion This idea, they would have to explain, originated, in the course of mankind's evolution, from certain outside influences, and is to-day a factor in the development of modern civilisation, with its technique of war and economic crises It is logically impossible, however, to maintain this attitude of the unconcerned spectator, trying to observe the happenings within human society from outside, without sharing in the conceptions denounced as

illusory , impossible because there is no considered action which does not rest on this very conception For the supporter of such a line of thought must claim that it is reasonable, thus basing his own thesis on the very thing that is denied in the thesis itself the assumption that he has formed his opinion after carefully weighing the pros and cons, and thus safeguarding it against error

For our purpose here there is no need to go into the controversy about the relationship between causality and free will It is enough to point out that in practice man constantly reckons with both causal necessity and free will We cannot, without contradicting ourselves, deny the possibility for man to influence the course of events by considered action We shall therefore take account of this possibility in our further investigations

CLARIFYING AND CONFIRMING ETHICAL CONVICTION

The second difficulty lies in the method we have to use in dealing with ethical questions Here again the two approaches have to be combined Since we have to do with questions of value, the descriptive and explanatory methods of scientific research are not sufficient , on the other hand, when we try to answer these questions of value, as ethics presents them, we have to take account of the world of experience and cannot therefore base our premises on divine revelation or abstract speculation We must begin with those considered actions which we experience in ourselves and others We have seen that in considered action man is guided by a certain notion of values, which leads him to shape arguments and make decisions in a way which to him seems to achieve the desired object Yet we also know from experience that our reasoning varies in depth, that the judgments we draw from it may be warped by prejudice or wishful thinking, and that we are therefore not justified in assuming that they are what an unbiased examination would show to be right

The only way to make such an unbiased examination is to persevere along the path which experience sets us upon In

other words, we must clarify and deepen our at first unreasoning awareness that a certain decision is right in the given circumstances. Passions may interfere with this awareness, habit, temporary or permanent influences of the environment, may deflect it from the direction it would have taken if allowed to develop free and undisturbed. But such disturbances can be overcome, as elsewhere, it is possible to eliminate prejudice from our convictions by thoughtful criticism. For this purpose we have to ask ourselves why in a particular situation we feel a certain course to be right, what are the grounds on which this feeling is based. Reviewing the whole situation we can recollect what factors moved us to recognise or to strive for something or other as a good. Such a review reveals to us the standard used by our own feelings in the particular instance, and enables us to determine whether this standard is one which we would always recognise in any situation whatever the circumstances, or whether our attitude, in this particular case, was due to external pressure or personal prejudice, and that we might have rejected or condemned it had we been detached observers.

This method, by which ethical convictions are clarified and purified, is the method of abstraction. It consists of a thorough examination of actual moral convictions as we experience them, and a search for the standard by which the unbiased feeling for right is guided. Thus it combines the two approaches. It starts from the fact that certain given relations and actions are judged by our feeling. It permits and even requires us to test the standards obtained by applying them to varying circumstances to find out whether they succeed or fail. If they fail it means that they do not, as we were first inclined to assume, pertain everywhere and in all circumstances. On the other hand, this method does not merely register what at present man holds to be good, but faces up to the crucial question whether what we regard as right and good is in truth really so. For the method of abstraction is a matter of freeing the sense of right and wrong, as we spontaneously feel it, from the disturbing influences and inhibitions which arise from the particular circumstances.

of the case, and penetrating to the generally applicable conviction on which it is based.

The attempt to obtain by this method a valid criterion to which the political worker can and should refer requires, admittedly, a confidence shared by few to-day, namely that in the human understanding there is an original moral interest. The method presupposes that there is a standard of right and wrong which we can discover by analysing our own convictions, and which is accessible to all who undertake this investigation with enough care and sincerity. Man's experience up to now admittedly gives little support to this confidence. The existing conflict of views as to what constitutes good and right social relationships, and the prevailing scepticism and relativism, have engendered widespread doubt whether generally applicable answers to ethical questions can be established at all. Here Kant's warning is still apt that one should refrain from "lining up with the mob who vulgarly refer to contradictory experience", in other words, one should beware of quoting past experience to prove that something is unalterable when all that is lacking is a sufficiently earnest attempt to alter it.

It is not proposed to put forward an abstract philosophical argument to prove that our method of analysis, if thoroughly carried out, must of necessity lead to a result of universal application*. Our present task is limited to the experiment of pursuing, by the procedure to which our investigation has led us, that clarification of the ethical convictions without which we cannot hope for a restoration and renewal of political life.

COMBINING RIGHT WITH MIGHT

Before we begin this experiment a few words should be said about the relationship we are trying to establish between politics and ethics.

* Such an investigation has been made by the school of thought called "critical philosophy". It has been carried furthest by Leonard Nelson in his book *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*.

Politics is the art of organising society in accordance with a given purpose. It follows that the politician has to make use of the forces which control the life of society. Consequently political questions always include the question of power. The achievement of a political programme largely, though not entirely, depends on the power of its representatives to overcome the opposition of their political opponents, if need be by forceful coercion. Ethics, as the teaching of what it is good to do and to strive for, appeals to the mind of man, to his readiness and capacity to work for the good without external compulsion.

How then can the art of politics base itself on ethical principles? How can the struggle for power be reconciled with the appeal to reason, how can the use of compulsion be combined with the ideal that men should freely choose that which is right?

The conflict between these two methods has often been regarded as irreconcilable. If this were the case, then we should have to relinquish the very task to which our argument leads, namely the need to shape politics in accordance with ethical standards. For if we reject the claims of ethics in political life we are giving our consent to the forces which to-day are using the very triumphs of civilisation and culture to the detriment of the human race. And, on the other hand, if the claims of ethics lead us to reject the struggle for power in favour of appeals to reason, we are leaving the field to these same forces. Even if we were to rely upon gradually curing the ills of society by means of education, we should be exposing the educational system itself to the mercy of any serious opponent who was not afraid to subject it to force. To try and discount this latter danger by arguing that in time enlightened moral claims will be respected even by these opponents, is simply to revive the old illusion that the forces of the good will inevitably triumph in Nature.

We have already met with this difficulty in discussing the clarification and justification of ethical convictions. We found an apparent contradiction between realism, which studies the actual forces working in Nature and society—without the

illusion that any natural law will ensure the victory of the good—and the ethical conviction that one can choose one's own aims and strive for what one deems right. We also found that the contradiction was only apparent, and that in fact these modes of thought are mutually dependent and, systematically pursued, inevitably lead to each other. We only get into a really contradictory position when, to avoid a contradiction we renounce one or other of the approaches, and refuse either to examine and accept facts as they are, or else to accept the guidance of our sense of values. The would-be realist who will have nothing to do with scales of value fails in consistency whenever he takes considered action. Similarly the would-be idealist who rejects the struggle for power and the use of physical force in order not to risk soiling his hands betrays his own ideals by rejecting the demands they make on him for their realisation.

The way out again lies in a combination of the two views, resulting in what may be called Ethical Realism. Applied to the problems of society this means that, as realists, we may not reject the use of force as a political means, but must be prepared if necessary to use it to attain and defend a more peaceful, free and just social order, and that, as idealists, we may not treat this means of political struggle as an end in itself, but look to ethics to guide our political actions so that the power of society is put at the service of peace, freedom and justice.

We have now to discuss how the guidance of ethics can be obtained and how, by using the method of abstraction, we can acquire a clearer understanding of the demands ethical convictions make on us.

CHAPTER V

THE THEORY OF RIGHT

THE POLITICAL APPROACH TO ETHICS

WE have a definite purpose in trying to clarify our ethical judgments and to trace them back to the underlying convictions in the field of values. We hope in doing so to establish the basis of a policy combining the two attitudes: The realist's sober assessment of the given social relations and forces, and the idealist's tenacious hold upon the political aim he recognises as right and good. This political interest determines the angle from which we approach our task. Ethical questions enter into all sides of life and there are various aspects from which one can begin to study them. We are here concerned with those which arise from the valuation of political conduct.

Two different questions at once arise and require to be clearly distinguished one from the other. Since politics is the art of organising society in accordance with a given purpose, the first question naturally is what that purpose should be. We have to ask what should be secured in the life of society by political means, by what criterion existing social relationships should be judged and political programmes examined as to the validity or urgency of their demands. On the other hand, since the pursuit of this aim can only be ensured if politically active people deliberately make it their own as the consequence of their convictions, the second question is unavoidable. What can induce a person deliberately to make the betterment of social conditions his purpose, and

for its sake to give up wishes and ideals which attract him to different fields of action ?

These two questions, though closely related, direct attention to quite different aspects of value. The second alone is directly concerned with ethical tasks, asking as it does what makes human beings act on moral lines, and concentrate on doing what they recognise to be right without either allowing more tempting goals to deflect them from their purpose, or being deterred by the magnitude of the efforts and sacrifices involved.

The first question, on the other hand, is not concerned with the springs of individual action but with existing social relationships and the extent to which these may be influenced or changed by organised action. It will have to be seen whether among the many possible purposes at which political life might aim, there are some the realisation of which would be valuable in itself, as distinct from merely serving the personal interest of individual politicians or social groups.

Failure to draw a clear line between the two questions may lead us to neglect one in favour of the other. Professor Carr, in his much-quoted book *The Conditions of Peace* (Macmillan, 1942) has described the crisis of our time as a moral one. This has caused him to concentrate mainly on the moral issue. His chief concern is to investigate whether and how the people of our day can be made more inclined to fulfil the duties and make the sacrifices necessary if civilisation is to be saved. Admittedly, without such a growth of moral vigour we cannot expect a renewal of political life. There is the danger, however, of concentrating exclusively on the moral appeal, and so of neglecting the question as to the desirable political aim.

This question about the aim is often evaded by the argument that duty and self-sacrifice have a moral value in themselves, whether or not the aim for which an individual sacrifices himself is a worthy one, and whether he achieves it or is frustrated in his purpose by external obstacles.

Though it is true that error or failure does not lessen the moral value of any otherwise valuable effort, it is equally

true that this moral value is incompatible with indifference or negligence in the fight against error and failure. Unless there is a serious effort to decide what political ends are worthy of our moral efforts, the appeal to morality involved does not deserve to be taken seriously. The seriousness of a man's sense of duty and sacrifice can be tested by finding out whether he really understands what it is his duty to do, what he is to make sacrifices for, and how he can serve these ends with the greatest prospect of success. To fail to realise this is to play into the hands of unscrupulous people like the Nazis who, for their own evil designs, abuse the eagerness of youth to act morally.

On the other hand it is just as fatal a mistake to concentrate on the aim to the point of forgetting the moral appeal. This common error has often been made by people who understood enough about politics to know that social wrongs cannot be righted merely by education and moral exhortation. Peace, freedom and social justice cannot be won merely by preaching to those who hold the key positions of power in society. But, vital as it is to seize these key positions and to prevent their misuse, the very achievement of the task depends on the existence of people who are willing to undertake it. It would be quite unrealistic and utopian to expect their private interests to sustain their will to struggle for such a purpose. An individual's private interests may happen to harmonise with the forces of progress, but social progress cannot be assured unless it is willed by active politicians who, being whole-heartedly determined to put an end to the abuse of power, begin with themselves and see to it that the power they exercise and seek to increase is used to further the cause of justice and liberty.

We must therefore study both these questions. It is appropriate to begin with the one which refers directly to the political aim and concerns the standards by which, with sufficient thought, we can determine the political form of the society for which we should strive.

PEACE, FREEDOM AND JUSTICE AS IDEALS

Policies and plans for post-war reconstruction are widely discussed to-day. We thus have the opportunity to examine the conceptions of society on which such plans are based, and to investigate the standards of value underlying these conceptions.

The first point to bear in mind is that we are dealing with questions of value, not with the investigation of social trends. The fact that the latter is so often given preference is due to the suspicion that the consideration of value tends to lose contact with reality, and so lends itself to the building of castles in the air. It is argued that whatever may be our political programme it has to be carried out in the world known to our experience, so that if we fail to recognise its real forces and relations, and thus to understand the trends of development, we are likely to put forward utopian schemes and create institutions which in the given circumstances may actually impede progress.

This argument is sound. Certainly a realist policy must rest on an adequate knowledge of social forces. But however well equipped with such knowledge a politician may be, he can only use it effectively to the extent that he knows what he is aiming to achieve. And it is not sufficient that his aim should be formulated only in reference to the particular situation and with too great a deference to the established facts. For in that case he has no criterion to guide him in determining how far he can and should go in his effort to change the given conditions.

For this reason we shall not discuss the question of the existing trends in society until we are clear about the criterion by which we should, as politicians, examine the given conditions and formulate our aims. Only when we have done this are we justified in asking how far and in what way we can serve our ideals in the world as it is.

Three main social demands, three main aspirations are put forward to-day. to secure a lasting peace, to make freedom a reality, to establish social justice. No one seriously inter-

ested in social progress will deny that these ideas all express urgent needs. Difficulties arise, however, when we begin to inquire into their meaning and consider the order of priority in which we should place them.

It is understandable that, after two world wars in a generation, many people give priority to the demand for peace. This is certainly legitimate if we are asking what is the first and most urgent task to deal with now, after the war. For there is no sense in any scheme for European reconstruction unless there is an assurance of lasting peace.

But if we ask which of these three ideas is linked with the more comprehensive standard of value, we shall have to place them in a different order. To secure peace is, in itself, only a negative aim. It means that the relations of individuals and nations shall not be determined by sheer power. When a power relationship exists, conflicts and disputes are settled by the stronger enforcing his will on the weaker party, without the value of this purpose being taken into account. Where power prevails in this way, intercourse among individuals and nations is governed merely by the interplay of the various social forces, and whether social progress is advanced or retarded is a matter of chance. It follows that the rule of chance can only be eliminated by the assurance of peace, which is thus the essential condition of the application of any standards of value to the life of society. But just for this reason, the demand for peace does not tell us what standards of value should apply in a society where peace is secured.

Moreover, if we seek peace because it is the condition for the creation of the good and the rational in society, we may not buy it at any price. We have had an object-lesson in the two wars through which we have lived, to show that a pacifist attitude is of no real service to man's yearning for peace. Peace obtained by unresisting submission to dictators is not a preparation for a better social order but, on the contrary, an acquiescence in power relationships. Consequently it is not even an assured peace, for it leads to sharper conflicts and lays the train for a new explosion. There is thus a limit beyond which peace ceases to be an ideal, and that limit is

determined by the other ideals of social life. A stand must be made against those who would subject social life to their arbitrary will. Only when their influence has been eliminated can peace provide the conditions for the construction of a better social order.

INTERDEPENDENCE OF JUSTICE AND FREEDOM

Of the other two demands, to make freedom a reality and to establish equality of rights for all, the first has for many the stronger appeal to-day. The struggle against Nazi tyranny waged by the suppressed peoples of Europe has been a struggle for the freedom of these peoples. Loss of freedom has aroused a greater spirit of resistance than any other deprivation or distress brought about by the war. More than once, even the Nazi terror machine had to give in to this opposition. Hostages have been threatened with death and yet have lived, when it became obvious that their execution would not break up the underground resistance. Strikers have won concessions. The compulsory mobilisation of the workers of the occupied countries for the German war industries was achieved on a less extensive scale than was anticipated. These were victories of the spirit of freedom triumphing over the instruments of despotic power. The struggle brought together men and women from different social classes and different political camps. Conflicting social and political opinions gave way to the unifying idea that to submit to the loss of freedom without a struggle was the worst of evils, even if the prospects of successful resistance seemed as bleak as they did, for instance, in the autumn of 1940.

But the struggle against Hitler had another aspect, which should warn us against over-estimating the importance of the idea of freedom even here. This struggle began very slowly. Hitler and his supporters had time enough to set up their Terror apparatus against the opposition in their own country and to create their war machine for the conquest of Europe, before they encountered any determined opposition. The hesitation of those who were ultimately to become in turn

the victims of the barbarian onslaught cannot be explained as due to ignorance. Everybody knew, or ought to have known, what kind of men the fascists were. Hitler never made a secret of his intention to carry out his plans without regard for anybody's freedom. Mussolini even spoke openly of the "decayed corpse of freedom." Nevertheless both Hitler and Mussolini succeeded for a long time in carrying out their plans because they always assured enough of their potential opponents that they would not interfere in their affairs. In exchange they merely required to be left a free hand to deal with a particular opponent. Thus they themselves insolently appealed to the idea of freedom—and in its name they were given a free field by those who were ready to sacrifice the freedom of others so long as they believed their own was not seriously threatened.

It may be said that this complaisance on the one hand and the pretensions of the dictators on the other are sheer abuses of the original idea of freedom, that the true love of freedom is incompatible with the oppression of others or even with the toleration of such oppression. But how are we to decide whether we are confronted by a case of oppression—in the sense of an arbitrary encroachment on the freedom of another by means of force—or whether a certain curtailment of his freedom is necessary, justifiable and reasonable? We cannot condemn as oppression every restriction of freedom. To demand unlimited freedom for all is a contradiction in terms. In every society all are mutually dependent, one on the other. One man's freedom of action restricts the freedom of others whose interests are affected by his action. We therefore need a standard by which to determine the frontiers between the spheres of freedom of different individuals. This standard does not lie in the idea of freedom itself, but in the third of the ideas to which we referred, the creation of just relations, or in other words the recognition of equal rights for all. We must therefore carefully study this demand, and see exactly what it means. If we neglect or disregard it, even the fight for freedom is in danger of becoming a mere struggle for privileges, and thus of losing its value. This is

not to say, however, that the idea of justice can be separated from that of freedom, or can even be applied without reference to it. As we have seen, the two are closely connected. For while conflicts between the desires of individuals for freedom must be settled justly and not by sheer force, it is equally true that among the demands which justice should guarantee in society is that of respect for human freedom.

In the mutual relation of these two ideas, however, priority must be given to the claims of justice. The effort to attain freedom is restricted by the claims of justice as soon as it clashes with similar efforts of others. In such a conflict the idea of justice rules out the assertion of individual desires regardless of other people's interests, it sets a limit beyond which the defence of one's own freedom has no ethical value. It is of course required of a just solution of conflicts that the value of freedom in human life shall be taken into account. This unequal mutual relation of the two ideas accounts for the fact that, especially in face of so extreme a suppression of freedom as we have seen in Fascist Europe, the fight for freedom seemed to be a more urgent and pressing task than that indicated by the sober appeal to work for a just settlement of social conflicts. To be free to order one's own life as one thinks fit is in itself an immediate value, a value admittedly which many people do not appreciate until this freedom is taken away from them. Justice merely demands that this value should be subject to the condition that whilst striving for one's own freedom one must not forget to respect the rights of others. The importance of justice lies in this restriction, not in the revelation of new values. But this restriction is the indispensable condition of the value of any society. Where this condition is disregarded, every cause pursued at the price of the neglect of the claims of justice is valueless and unjustifiable—however noble the social ideals on which it rests.

JUSTICE AS THE IDEA OF EQUALITY

What is social justice? It has often been explained by the

idea of equality. The latter expresses a fundamental and ineradicable demand of the feeling for justice, a protest against all the various privileges which have dominated social life through the ages, and the claim that equal chances in society be given to all. But this interpretation of the idea of justice leads to difficulties as soon as we try to apply it to existing social conflicts and problems. There is an uneasy suspicion that equality, if thoroughly carried out, would make for a uniformity of life which would hinder free development. It is argued that men are not all alike, that they have different gifts and interests, and that they therefore have different claims on society and possibilities of development. To disregard these differences and force everybody into a uniform scheme would still affect different people unequally. Independent and richly gifted individuals who find it more difficult than others to fit themselves into a set scheme would be more harshly affected than the more passive people, who are more ready to adapt themselves to their environment.

These very objections, however, draw our attention to the fact that the idea of equality must not be confused with this kind of uniformity. Equality, as demanded by our sense of justice, has nothing to do with the obliteration of variety. Justice does not protest against the differences between one human personality and another but against the privileges of those who gain profits by depriving others of their freedom and happiness. These differences in the rights which society concedes to different individuals would not even be eliminated by external uniformity. For there would still be the question by what pattern would the social uniform be cut, for whom would it be a strait-jacket worn under the compulsion of a ruling class?

The ever-recurring misunderstanding which identifies equality with uniformity arises from a lack of clarity as to what we mean by our demand for equality. As already pointed out the protest of justice is not against the natural differences between men but against the privileges which society concedes to some at the expense of depriving others of the chance of a free and happy life. By privilege we mean

that where there is a conflict of interests and claims, the interests of some are regarded from the outset as of more importance than those of others. That is to say, they are so regarded without reference to the value or urgency of the interests themselves but in relation to the social status of the persons involved, their membership of a particular class, race or other social group. Against this inequality our demand is for a system of equality in which each will have an equal chance to satisfy his interests, at least in so far as this depends on social institutions.

To see the point more clearly we need only consider the kind of conflict which involves problems of justice. These are invariably conflicts involving more than one person. Not every conflict of interests is of this kind. There are cases in which a man is in conflict only with himself, when his own interests clash and he has to decide which of them he wants to satisfy at the expense of the others. It may be difficult and often puzzling for him to decide what to do, but as long as the problem concerns only his own interests there is no question of the defence or abolition of privilege. He has only himself to consider and has, therefore, no opportunity to disregard some of the interests concerned simply because they are not his interests but those of others, of persons that are not in a position to intervene in his decision.

The inequality with which the demand for justice is concerned arises from the fact that each individual is directly prompted by his own interests only—by the interests of other persons at best only in so far as he takes an interest in their satisfaction. Apart from considerations of justice, there will therefore be almost as many solutions to a conflict of clashing interests as there are persons affected. Each will uphold the solution that best serves his own interests without regard for the fact that it violates the interests of others, unless indeed he sympathises with these other interests, in which case he himself has an interest in their satisfaction. The solution actually accepted—if no consideration of justice is admitted—no longer depends on the weighing up of the various interests, but on the skill and power with which each individual

happens to fight for his own cause

To give an equal chance to all therefore means to arrive at a solution of the conflict which is independent of this distinction of persons, which treats all the clashing interests as if they were conflicting interests within the same individual. If this principle is adhered to, we avoid all the privileges of individuals or favoured social groups based on their physical, economic or social superiority, and enabling them to overrule with impunity the interests of their social inferiors. Justice demands that the weighing up of clashing interests shall not stop at the frontier dividing the interests of an individual or a social group from those of others, but that all interests involved shall be taken into account on whichever side of the frontier they stand

THE CRITERION OF EQUALITY

An old objection raised against every attempt to establish a permanent standard binding on all members of a society is that it would inevitably stifle the life of that society. For how could any such standard meet the demands of constantly changing conditions? All the rules of social intercourse, which we accept to make our mutual relationships clearer and more easily predictable, have been established with reference to the circumstances existing at the time. Where this fact has been ignored and an attempt made to treat these temporary rules as eternal moral laws the fruitful growth and development of society has been arrested. The resulting paralysis of the social structure is aptly described by Goethe "Reason becomes unreason, benefits burdens. Woe to those with such an inheritance."

How does this apply to the standard of equality which we have just found to be the guiding principle in conditions of social justice? Equality requires nothing but that the interests of the weaker shall not be disregarded simply because they are the interests of the weaker and because in this society certain favoured groups occupy a privileged position. Equality demands the ending of class privilege. But precisely

how equality is to be established, what social forms and institutions conform to it or contradict it—these things are not established by the principle itself. They are questions which have to be decided according to the social conditions prevailing at the time, and the answer may therefore vary in different conditions. It will depend upon the interests that exist in that society, on the extent to which the satisfaction of some of these interests prevents the satisfaction of others. It also depends on the means available in the society whereby one section can bring other members under its domination. The means and methods employed by a ruling class vary according to the natural resources of the country and the stage of civilisation reached through the advance of technical and scientific knowledge. The reproach of rigidity therefore cannot be levelled against the standard of justice. On the contrary, the decision as to what should or should not be done in given conditions is so dependent on those conditions that the question may well be asked whether freedom to adapt rules to existing conditions does not entail renouncing the criterion by which we can distinguish right from wrong. According to the standard of justice, this distinction was to be the result of a weighing up of clashing interests. But how is this to be done? How can we decide which of these interests deserves to be satisfied and which have to yield for the sake of overriding interests? The principle of equality demands only that the decision shall be made without anyone having an initial privilege, nobody shall enjoy advantages which are only his because he and other members of his class can disregard and override the interests of others. But what weight shall we ascribe to these other interests and how are we to determine which interests deserve priority?

To this question the principle of equality supplies no automatic answer. It demands no more than that the judge in a conflict should weigh fairly all the conflicting interests as if they all equally concerned him, as if therefore they were all his own interests and as if it were a case of a conflict of interests within one person. Now we know that even such conflicts within a person can be very difficult to solve. We

shall therefore expect to find similar difficulties in trying to settle conflicts between different persons on the principle of equality of rights. True though this is, we must not therefore lose sight of the incisive and definite quality even of the negative formula that privileges are no longer to be permitted. The extent of the political consequences of this condition can be realised if we consider the valid Marxian inference that the history of all hitherto existing societies is a history of class struggles. For the class character of a society is shown in that one class shapes social relationships to suit its own interests and is able to dominate the rest of the society by its control over the essentials of life. It is sufficient to be born a member of the ruling class to participate in its privileges. Against the inequality inherent in this class system we set the demand for just social relationships. Thus the demand for equality is no vague slogan. The socialist programme, aiming to free society from class privileges, is an expression of the inalienable claims of man's sense of justice.

PROBLEMS OF APPLICATION

The question has still to be answered how we are to decide between the conflicting interests of different people. The problem is difficult, because, as we have seen, even the conflict of interests within one and the same person is difficult to settle, as it is not always evident to the individual concerned which of his interests he should prefer. This difficulty of choice may partly be explained from the fact that he has not sufficient knowledge of all the circumstances. If he does not know exactly on what the success of his efforts may depend, he will be uncertain what to do to achieve as much as possible of what he wants. If he makes a mistake in his estimate of the situation, he may find himself working against his own interests. So it is quite understandable that men, conscious of the possibility of error, hesitate before making important decisions and perhaps turn uncertainly from one solution to another.

The same difficulty arises where conflicts of interests between

different persons are concerned. If decisions are made with incomplete knowledge of all the circumstances or are based on an incorrect estimate of the situation, the consequences may be unintended and perhaps even fatal. In that case, however, the risk threatens the interests not merely of the man who makes the decision, but also of others who are entitled to have their interests respected. A responsible person will be particularly careful to examine all the circumstances because of his obligation towards other people's interests.

In so far as it is possible, by such an examination, to gain sufficient knowledge of the circumstances to make a fair decision, no new ethical problem arises. Justice obviously demands that decisions in which the interests of others are concerned (and every political decision is of this kind) must be based on an examination of all the circumstances. This is only another consequence of what we have already argued, that the principle of justice cannot be represented as a code of unchangeable rules and regulations but must be interpreted according to the actual conditions in any given situation.

There is a deeper difficulty in cases where we cannot foresee with any certainty what the consequences of our decision may be. This is a constant problem in political life and is particularly acute in times of crisis like the present. For instance, almost every decision in the conduct of military operations is inevitably full of risks, whether the decision be to take the initiative oneself or to leave it to the enemy to do so, and the lives of innumerable people may be at stake. It is impossible to avoid this risk because vital information may be entirely inaccessible to those who have to make decisions, or sometimes because they are unable to gather all the relevant information in time. The same applies in other fields of social life. The introduction of economic measures, the exploitation of technical inventions, the building up of a Party or a State apparatus—all confront the politician with the same problem of allowing for the risk that is involved in his decision.

But however heavily this uncertainty may weigh on men

conscious of their responsibility, it does not mean that our criterion is inapplicable here. It requires of the politician that, to the best of his knowledge and conscience, he must weigh the possible consequences of his actions against each other. For this purpose he must seek the advice of those who have proved specially able to estimate the expected consequences, he must exclude from counsel those who are known to be heedless of risks where others, and not they themselves, are concerned. Such a course of action requires knowledge of affairs and of men. In some cases experience and high powers of judgment are called for. But all these difficulties merely concern our more or less imperfect knowledge of the facts and we can and must tackle them to the best of our ability. They do not involve any lack of clarity in the standard of value on which the decision ought to be based.

THE CONCEPTION OF FREEDOM

A lack of clarity only arises where after a thorough examination of facts there is still an uncertainty as to the interest that ought to be preferred, or, where a decision involves risks, as to whether the aim pursued is worth such risks. Here is the place for such questions as what sacrifices are justified in the struggle for a better social order, what burdens the individual should be asked to accept, say, for the sake of furthering art or science, or the question whether interests not regarded as strictly economic should find a place in the economic system—as, for instance, the interest to choose an occupation for its own sake, even if it is economically disadvantageous.

In these cases the problem is to estimate the value of the various claims. And it cannot be solved simply by considering how a person would decide if without prejudice or partiality he weighed all the conflicting interests against each other. Even where an individual has only his own conflicting interests to deal with, the decision may be neither easy nor obvious even to the person concerned. If his interest in security, comfort or pleasure struggles with his desire for a fuller and

keener life, or maybe with his interest in science or art or his desire to take part in the building of a better social order, it may well be that he is uncertain which of these aims are worth the sacrifice of the others

His vacillations reveal a lack of uncertainty about his real interests. In practice we make a distinction between what a person wants at the moment, perhaps instinctively and irrationally, and what are in the given circumstances his real interests—what would be good for him. The fact that we make this distinction implies that his passing desires and urges are not necessarily in harmony with what he himself would, on reflection, recognise as good and valuable.

These desires result from immediate stimuli—and it is by no means certain that they will not conflict with other interests of the individual which can be less immediately satisfied, and are therefore at the moment forgotten. It is even less certain that such fleeting desires conform to his deeper interest in giving his life a lasting value.

So we arrive again at the conclusion that there is no natural, inevitable connection between what actually happens and what is good and valuable. This is true of the use man makes of his own life. To be clear in one's own mind what aims are worth pursuing requires thought and perseverance. It requires even stronger efforts to build one's life deliberately on these foundations. Comparatively few people have seriously tried to direct their lives in this way and have not been defeated by the difficulties. By far the greater number seem to live within so rigid a framework of established tradition and custom that little room for individual choice and decision is left, save in more or less trifling matters.

Yet how can anyone who does not understand his own interests deal fairly with the interests of others? What is to be his criterion when, after exhaustive examination of the facts, he has to decide what are the true interests of each participant and what value they have?

If this criterion is not to be an arbitrary one, or to be based uncritically on prejudice, we must use the method of abstraction which helped us in analysing the demand for

equality We have again to enquire what are the first reactions of people to the problems of the value and importance of conflicting interests, and what are the standards which prompt these reactions

It must be borne in mind that what we are seeking is a guide for the politician We do not therefore ask how an individual can best pursue his true interests and thus make of his life something worthy of his efforts Our concern is the extent to which the individual who strives to live in this way is dependent on prevailing social conditions This leads us to find out what are the true interests involved in social conflicts and deserving our respect in working out a solution. In this way we can decide what are the goods and values to which every member of a society should have equal access

We have already noted the answer to this question put forward to-day with increasing urgency under the impact of world war and fascism. The struggle against these forces of destruction has been accepted as a struggle for freedom.

The idea of freedom itself requires clarification, however. It has often been pointed out, rightly enough, that the idea is empty and negative until we know *from* what and *for* what we want freedom One modern statesman has proclaimed the Four Freedoms - freedom from want, freedom from fear, freedom of speech and religion This declaration is often regarded as an expression of what the social struggle to-day is about But any such enumeration of freedoms leaves us still in the dark as to the grounds on which this choice of freedoms is made Consequently we have no guarantee that the selection is exhaustive, nor does it provide a criterion by which we may judge between the values of the different freedoms should one happen to conflict with another or with other values in life

However, attempts to go more deeply into the human longing for freedom only lead us back, apparently, to the problem of the meaning and value of life When a man asks "Freedom for what?" and "Freedom from what?" he shows he is not indifferent to the use that may be made of freedom He seeks its value in that a man is free for something that

gives his life value Where an individual takes no thought of the value and meaning of his life and uses freedom merely to indulge his passing urges and caprices, he is abusing his freedom and it then loses its value

The judgment that the value of freedom has to be measured by the purposes for which it is used is found in every serious statement of the human claim to freedom It is revealed in the consciousness that freedom is not a good presented to man by circumstances when they happen to be favourable, but something which cannot be won without one's own effort Anyone who desires freedom to shape his life as seems best to him has to face decisions not always easy to make He takes on himself the responsibility for what he makes of his life Many people shrink from such responsibility Thus freedom is often regarded as a dangerous gift, and men have preferred to have their lives directed by an authority which would relieve them of the difficulty of deciding what they should or should not do

The fundamental difficulty we meet here is obviously that of properly reconciling two claims, both connected with freedom There is the claim that men can and should be free to shape their own lives, and the claim that in doing so they should not make arbitrary decisions but be guided by consideration of the ends that are worth living for To support the first claim and ignore the second is to confuse freedom with license To concentrate on the second and forget the first leads men to draw up codes for their fellow men, encouraging them to refer to authority rather than to exercise their own powers of judgment

In either case the high conception of freedom for which men have struggled and died is relinquished This high conception is based on trust in man's ability to order his thought and action in the light of what he himself recognises to be good and true Furthermore it implies confidence that man can use this ability and rationally determine his own life

We have already found that this ability can at least be detected in every considered thought and act, even though its operation is narrowly restricted by instinct and passion,

prejudice and thoughtlessness To extend these limits, to overcome the inner obstacles to an independent rational ordering of one's life is a task that the individual has to undertake for himself if he seriously aspires to have freedom But the question whether the environment in which he grows up and the conditions under which he lives help or hinder him to appreciate the value and the responsibilities of freedom is a social question, a question of just laws and institutions This is the question with which we are here concerned Since it is in man's true interest to be free, though he is often unaware of it, justice demands that every member of a society shall have an equal opportunity to shape his own life in a rational way, in so far as this opportunity depends on social conditions

There are many ways in which social conditions can deny men this opportunity for example, poverty which absorbs all a man's powers in the economic struggle, the menace of unemployment and war which prevents the planning of one's life with any sense of security, an excess of economic planning and prohibitive regulations, depriving the individual of the right of decision on vital issues and compelling him to abide by the rulings of others Such restrictions may nevertheless challenge a freedom-loving person to take up the fight against them, it is the man who wears the shoe who knows where it pinches Of a more dangerous character are those restrictions that do not arouse opposition Systems of education designed not to bring up free personalities but docile creatures who will accept without question the authority of a State or a Church or a traditional set of opinions, destroy at an early stage the child's confidence that he can learn to govern himself and make his own decisions

So to the questions "Freedom from what?" "Freedom for what?" we reply - freedom from all restrictions which block the way to rational self-determination, freedom for each one to consider what gives value to his life and to decide for himself how to live in the light of this insight

Every member of society has an equal right to this freedom unless and until he shows by criminal acts that he is unworthy of it

CHAPTER VI

POLITICS AS MORAL TASK

SOCIETY THE CONCERN OF ALL

TUA res agitur—"Something of concern to all," says a Roman poem. Only if we find that these words are applicable to our investigation regarding the ideals of peace, freedom and justice have we taken a step forward. For this investigation is not intended as a purely academical one, it should serve a practical political purpose. Our starting point was the recognition that as regards social development there is no *inevitable* advance towards the good society. Progress in society is not something which falls from the skies into our lap. It is dependent upon the efforts of human beings. But will a sufficient number of people set about this task with the requisite amount of determination? Certainly only those with a clear and lively interest in peace, freedom and justice come in question. But even that is not enough. They must not only understand the nature of these ideals but be resolved to work to achieve them. The essential question is: What sense and value is there in the participation in this task?

We are not concerned here with prophesying how many people will conceivably make a positive decision in this matter and what energies they will expend in following their aim. It is the ethical question that interests us, whether human beings can have and can discover a valid reason for accepting the struggle for peace, freedom and justice as their task. The implications of this struggle differ with different people and

they change with changing circumstances. What is demanded of human beings at different periods is influenced by ever-changing political and economic conditions. The inhibitions and desires within people that stand in conflict with ethical claims also vary in form and degree in different people. We need, therefore, a very firm conviction if we are to weigh up again and again in each new situation the conflicting claims and interests, guided only by the single aim of establishing freedom and justice in society.

Can we find such a conviction in human reason? Do we encounter it when people are faced with the question of their personal contribution and, perhaps, of their responsibility for social developments?

All experience goes to show that this question about individual responsibility agitates the mind more acutely in periods when the gulf between social realities and the ideals of justice and freedom is revealed with particular clarity. The forces of resistance which made themselves felt in oppressed Europe, and which united whole nations in the struggle for freedom, did not arise because an easy victory seemed imminent. Some years before, when the consolidation of the Nazi regime and the perfection of its war machine could have been checked at a much lower cost in human life and suffering than was demanded later, the necessary readiness to act decisively was lacking. A few people with foresight tried in vain to achieve what was later done under the immediate pressure of the Nazi terror. Eventual resistance to Nazi oppression developed great momentum despite the fact that heavy sacrifices in terms of life and all that makes life valuable were demanded, whilst earlier the amount of time and energy demanded would have been much less. When the French resistance movement awoke to life, some months after the collapse in June, 1940, it drew its strength precisely from the belief that the struggle had to be waged no matter whether the outcome proved to be success or failure. When in the summer and autumn of the same year the British people stood alone against a formidable enemy that had raced from success to success, when they faced air attacks and the threat of invasion, the will to hold

out whatever the consequences grew stronger, and united the whole nation

Admittedly, there was no shortage of people who capitulated to Fascism or evaded the struggle against it although they knew well enough how evil this system was. Most people who acquiesced in it sought to explain their attitude by enumerating the various things they would have otherwise sacrificed. It was said that one had to live, to look after one's family, or to complete some artistic or scientific piece of work which required undivided attention.

Compared with the convictions of those who faced danger, poverty and insecurity and yet did not abandon the resistance struggle, all these arguments betray a failure to consider and weigh up conflicting claims. It is true they gave an answer to the question of how far one can and ought to go in making sacrifices for the sake of realising a decent social order, for a very exact line is drawn which under no circumstances shall be crossed. But it is drawn only with an eye on those things in life which one is not prepared to risk. Rarely is the attempt made to compare the value of these things with the urgency of the claim for help in the struggle for peace, justice and freedom.

The difference, therefore, between those who join this struggle and those who refuse to pay the necessary price, especially in times like the present, need not necessarily be traceable to different standards. Some people, possibly stirred by some particularly drastic experience, may have widened their horizon and reviewed their previous standards in the light of new claims which pushed themselves into the foreground, whilst others have clung persistently to old established values and refused to open their minds seriously to new claims. In such cases, the difference in attitude rests on the fact that different people have concluded their weighing up of the problem at different points.

The standard of values which guides our feelings in the process of weighing up shows itself most clearly when people, in reflecting upon the good, do not hesitate to consider new claims which might run counter to the interests they have

previously pursued. This is the case with those people who, in response to the challenge of our time and its catastrophes, are willing to compare the values they have esteemed in the past with the urgent need for them to take an active part in the fight for freedom and social justice. It is not the case with those who refuse to consider anything outside the established scope of their lives.

What is this feeling which induces people to regard the struggle against slavery and exploitation as the prime purpose of their lives, even at a risk of being defeated? It gives expression to two things: one is a judgment on society, on the prevailing exploitation and oppression, the other the realisation that only by sheer self-deception can we try to give a purpose to our individual lives without considering the tasks which face us in public life.

The first point leads us back to the question as to the value of the society in which we live. Disregard for freedom and justice is not some blemish which can be outbalanced by other social values. Even if Hitler had succeeded throughout Occupied Europe in eliminating unemployment, in establishing a planned economy in order to stabilise his regime on the Continent and prepare for further expansion, even the advantages which might have accrued to the peoples of Europe would not have made good the violation of even the most elementary demands of justice. For those who respect these demands there can be no compromise with the representatives of such a regime.

But is it necessary to oppose them? Time and time again, people who were perfectly aware of the nature of the Nazi regime have tried to hold aloof from the political struggle for its overthrow in order to serve aims which they considered had a value independent of the social conditions of the time. Scientific institutes in which they carried out research, artistic activities to which they were devoted, personal relations in the family or between friends, all became islands in the political stream of events where they dwelt secure from the political upheavals and unmolested by the conflicts of the world.

This attitude of escapism from a threat which affects the whole fate of society is rejected by those who have weighed up the claims of their individual lives against the bigger issues affecting humanity. The so-called independence of such a life of seclusion is an illusion. Devotion to art or science, to the creation of relatively free human relations which is possible in such a protected environment has helped to mislead the world about the real state of affairs in society. Indeed it has been assiduously exploited for this very purpose. Those who adapt themselves to a regime such as Hitler's and close their eyes to the political happenings around them for the sake of things which in themselves are valuable, support and strengthen the system in taking up such an attitude. There can be no neutrality when people stand face to face with the moral and cultural decline of a corrupt social order. Those who do not struggle against it grant it their support. However fine and noble the achievements otherwise attained, they are rendered worthless by the share in the social injustices with which they are burdened.

Kant stated

"Where justice is dead, there is no sense in mankind's continuing to live."

The sharp rigidity of these words has provoked dissent. The same protest may be levelled against the previous assertion that participation in the struggle against injustice has an importance above all other tasks which we may set ourselves. How can this rigid claim be reconciled with the ideal of freedom according to which each individual should consider and choose for himself the ideals and purposes he wants to pursue?

As we have already noted, this idea of freedom is not in itself an adequate guide when deciding upon the most valuable course of action. The members of a ruling caste may freely shape their own lives while arbitrarily excluding all others from the same possibility, in which case their claim to freedom is an insult and, being unjustifiable, merits no respect even though it enables a privileged class to further art, science and culture.

The same idea applies when we enquire into the responsibilities of the individual for the furthering of social developments. Those who, in the name of the ideal of freedom, seek to hold themselves aloof from the chaos and the injustices that surround them and gain the upper hand, do in fact will these evils, for they tolerate them. At the same time they refuse to act in solidarity with the innocent victims of injustice and with those who strive to create a society worthy of human beings. Yet those others are dependent upon that solidarity, if they are to carry on.

Thus it is the idea of justice which challenges the conception that no limits should be placed upon the exercise of freedom. This idea expresses itself in two ways: in the interest of the individual in a decent society, and in the rightful claims of our fellow-men that we should sustain their efforts to establish such a society.

Interpreted in this way, limitations placed upon the exercise of freedom in no way stand in conflict with the ideal of freedom. This ideal sets us the task of shaping our lives in accordance with a considered judgment about the good. Such rational self-determination cannot ignore the idea of justice, if it goes deep enough into the meaning of the good. If we ourselves reflect seriously enough about the crisis of our time and what is required of us, we are led to seek the purpose of our lives in the part we can play in over-coming that crisis and thus in establishing just relations between individuals and between nations. *Tua res agitur*

But in reaching this conclusion, have we not succumbed to utopia? If all people are able to recognise that their participation in the political struggle is necessary in their own interests, is not then simple enlightenment about those interests enough to end the existing world order and establish a better one in its place?

It is a fact that the attempt has often been made to substitute such work of enlightenment for the political struggle with all its hardships. Yet attempts of this kind have never succeeded in attaining any decisive changes in society. Indeed, how could they?

To enlighten and educate people, we need time and leisure and circumstances which stimulate people to think about the things that are worth while in life

Such educational work is therefore dependent on the existing social conditions. A comprehensive scheme of education cannot exist as long as political power is wielded by people who are governed by their own personal interests and those of their family or class, however much they talk of freedom and justice. Those in power will always oppose such an educational scheme, because their own position would become untenable if it were to succeed, and they have the power to destroy the factors that are important for its success. Anyone really interested in the enlightenment of the masses must therefore concentrate, in the first place, on the task of getting political power into the hands of people who welcome and support this enlightenment. These can only be people who are confident that their policy will be approved by enlightened people who care for peace and justice.

This brings us back to the old Platonic saying that either kings must become philosophers—men with the self-knowledge and self-control necessary always to know what values in life are worth striving for and to live accordingly—or philosophers must become kings. Confucius expressed the same idea when he taught his disciples that they should accept the responsibility of establishing just social relations, for “it is by taking office that the noble do their duty”.

It is, therefore, indeed utopian to try and better social conditions by instruction and education only. To create and secure social justice is a political task. If it is to succeed, this task must be undertaken by people who find in it the fulfilment and the meaning of their lives and who, consequently, are determined to give it priority over conflicting interests.

Where are we to find such people? On the basis of our argument the answer is a twofold one. On the one hand, the urgency of the appeal can be understood by everyone able to take considered action and to observe what is going on around him. On the other hand, this understanding comes to nobody

as a gift of nature, at least with the clarity and resolution necessary to make it the controller of the will, nobody is predestined for it by his innate disposition or environment. The natural forces which influence the development of any human being may help or hinder his understanding of the urgency of this task. They may divert his attention and interest from the question of the meaning and value of life, or they may lead him to reflect about himself. Nobody is free from the pressure of internal and external forces which make it difficult for him to get straight. Some people may find it harder than others to overcome these obstacles—but nobody finds it easy. It is an aim that has to be striven for, by a persistent and relentless effort. What we need are politicians who have made this effort and are prepared to go on doing so.

We have seen that the enlightenment and education of the people is impossible without the prior achievement of political changes. Now we have found that this political spadework cannot be undertaken except by people properly trained for it. Is this a vicious circle, leading us from the educational task to the political and back again? No! for we are not back at the utopian idea of putting social conditions right by general education alone. Education, as we now conceive it, is not an end in itself—it is no more and no less than a necessary means to a political end. Those who go in for this education do not overlook the fact that social progress is opposed by political forces which cannot be overcome by persuasion or education and which control the educational institutions of society. This type of political education is therefore not for all, and is no substitute for the political struggle. It is for those who in the existing circumstances are best suited and most willing to engage in the political struggle for peace, freedom and justice. Its purpose is to strengthen them for this fight, so that, constantly facing up to new conflicts and tasks as they arise, they will remain true to their goal.

THE PURPOSE OF POLITICAL EDUCATION

Is it at all possible thus to train men and women for their political tasks? We have deduced the necessity of such education from the fact that, whereas everybody can see the urgency of the task and fulfil it, nobody has this insight and preparedness to act as a gift of nature

Many people believe the contrary, that the field in which a man can best work depends primarily on his intellectual gifts, on his abilities or even on a special calling. They maintain that this is especially true in the political field, because here stupidity and self-interest have done so much harm and still do so. And this harm affects, not individuals only, but entire classes and peoples, it affects human society itself. According to this school of thought, therefore, only those who feel a strong urge from within to fight against social evils ought to do so. For if a man does this without the strong urge, he is in danger of being overwhelmed by the difficulties, and of adding to the number of those who impede and distort social progress by indecision, selfishness and stupidity.

A warning against this type of politician is only too apt. In hardly any other province of human activity is it as widely assumed as in politics that from a certain age onwards everyone can and should have a say. In hardly any other field are there fewer expert tests whether anyone claiming an influence on events is well-informed and disinterested enough to act in a way which is really in the interest of those affected. As long as access to political offices which require special knowledge and responsibility can be obtained on the strength of clever propaganda or economic pressure, it will be a matter of chance whether social justice is achieved and with what skill and consistency it is pursued. Many serious people have refrained from taking part in politics because they have felt that too many unqualified and dishonest people were already making trouble in the political field, and that they, too, would not be equal to the task. Instead of blundering in politics, they have preferred tasks which they considered more in keeping with their own abilities.

This is understandable, but it is a reaction which aggravates the evil instead of removing it. If those who realise the need for establishing justice in society turn away from politics, they will then leave the field to others who are either unaware of the magnitude of the political tasks or who lack interest in their solution. Anybody who has conceived these tasks as having the first and foremost claim on his life will therefore not be content to wait for others who are inspired by their innate sense of justice, and whose natural gifts ensure their triumph over obstacles and opponents. On the contrary, he will look to his own strength and resources in order to find out how he can best contribute them to the solution of these tasks, and what training he needs to do this with success.

Experience teaches us that more people will realise this at times when general interest is focussed on the political field more sharply than usual by extraordinary events and incidents. We may again mention the fact that the resistance movements in Europe mobilised entire peoples. Those who have become aware that the fight for freedom is their concern and requires their personal participation are far more numerous than those who take an interest in politics in general. In the resistance movement unity has not been the result of a community of natural endowment, inclination or way of thinking. It was the result of being at the mercy of a ruthless enemy. Despite all counter-measures, this common experience kindled a fighting spirit in the oppressed, and at the same time a mutual understanding and solidarity among those who were exposed to the same oppression and fought the same fight.

It may be objected that this sense of community, born of such tremendous experiences, will last only as long as the common emergency. Even in the days when the collapse of the Hitler regime was only imminent, there were signs that unity was in danger. Men and women, who for the sake of the common cause had readily given up their special wishes and class privileges, began to consider whether they could not perhaps get out more cheaply.

It would be wrong to deny that there have been experiences

of this kind But what do they prove ? Merely that even an object lesson like that of 1940 is nothing but a reminder to human beings of their social responsibilities , it does not ensure that they will continue to remember their responsibilities when faced with the distracting temptations of other times Even great events like those of 1940 do not relieve us of the task of clarifying our understanding of this responsibility and strengthening our will to fulfil it

We cannot here examine in detail how this special educational task should be undertaken and by what means it will achieve its purpose In so far as it is necessary to show that such educational work is possible, it will suffice to point out that it does not seek to force the individual into a scheme which is alien to him, but primarily to assist him to become aware of what is right and good As for the further question, upon what guiding principles political education is to be constructed, we have space only for a few hints which may indicate the immense scope of the task

This kind of education can and must begin with the self-examination which is stimulated by vital experiences in the personal and in the social field It is the task of education to prevent this self-examination from being prematurely interrupted or distorted In the life of society, it is menaced in many ways Too many difficulties in the way may discourage people and blunt their purpose, and so may the daily drudgery of routine work as a result of which a keen interest in the task is forgotten And, as psycho-analysis has taught us, it may be disturbed by urges and wishes which are repressed from consciousness so that it is impossible rationally to examine and accept or reject them.

There are pedagogical and psychological methods, worked out on the basis of experience, which provide guidance in overcoming these dangers For the purposes of political education, however, it is still necessary to ask how far the elimination of these inhibitions helps one to analyse more deeply the value and meaning of one's life To train people to work on themselves in this way is the great task that confronts us.

The success or failure of political education will become apparent only in the political arena. It is the task of political education to give an ethical basis to politics and thus to eliminate the many symptoms of decadence so prevalent in our day. This task does not end when people have decided to fight for the realisation of justice, peace and freedom. The real question is what comes of this decision in the day-to-day political struggle.

Many people assert that politics will almost necessarily corrupt a man's character, and all the more so if he pursues his aim with unusual determination and tenacity. For all the greater will be the temptation to abandon the moral scruples which hamper him in overcoming obstacles and dealing with political opponents. Having once yielded to this temptation, he will soon be prepared to take any step which promises to remove obstacles from his path and bring him nearer his goal. It would appear that, in the political struggle, the unscrupulous always have the advantage over those who are restrained by their consciences and refuse to use means which they do not consider right and good. Do not the moral and ethical considerations which guide us in the selection of our aim handicap us in the choice of our means of action? Does not the politician who depends upon them lose in striking force and effectiveness what he has gained in determination and moral integrity?

Behind these doubts lies uncertainty as to what is permissible in the political struggle if we desire to adhere to enlightened ethical principles. To this question there are two answers which appear to point in different directions. One emerges from the importance for human society of the chosen political aim. This aim is based on more than the wishes and desires of one or even of a few individuals—it springs from certain demands of justice which ought to be observed in the life of the community, and to which anybody who cares thoroughly and without prejudice to examine them can assent. When confronted with conflicting claims and interests, therefore, this aim can claim priority. The implication is that means which violate otherwise legitimate interests, and which

would therefore be wrong in other circumstances, are permissible and even essential if they are required in the fight for this political end

On the other hand, however, if the consideration of what is good, and should therefore be done, is seriously intended, it cannot be confined to a single sphere, to the setting of a single goal in life. Anyone who really wishes to improve social conditions stands, whether he admits it or not, for certain moral claims of justice by which he judges the relationships between human beings. He has a conception of the way in which these relations should be regulated, and cannot, therefore, consistently evade the question how far he himself applies them in his dealings with his fellow men. This consideration does not necessarily coincide with that of the appropriateness of a certain line of behaviour to produce a certain political effect.

In political practice these two lines of thought seem to tend towards opposite extremes. The first is easily recognised in the argument used to support the maxim that "the end justifies the means,"—as applied to the political end of social progress—which, it is suggested, justifies every means which helps to further it. The second appears in the charge that this maxim has poisoned political life even where it was originally applied to a good end.

To give an example. Is there in political life a duty to be truthful and to treat as binding the promises and treaties one has entered into? In all fields of political life we are confronted with the question whether and how far it is excusable to obtain political influence by applying fraudulent methods. According to the principle that the end justifies the means, there is only one barrier to the application of such methods, and that is the possibility that they might become an obstacle to the attainment of that end. This might, for instance, happen if the exposure of a fraud were to arouse mistrust among people on whose trusting co-operation or toleration the politician depends. But even then, if he sticks to the maxim he has the choice of avoiding this danger of loss of confidence either by being genuinely trustworthy or

by learning how to lull growing mistrust and avert suspicion. The political experience of all times gives plenty of clues as to how this can be done. The choice between these two ways of behaviour depends, by this standard, only on the utilitarian consideration which of these ways leads most quickly and easily to the desired end? Any lie or broken promise is justified if it fulfils this condition. Pursued to the extreme, this consideration of expediency applies to everybody to the ally no less than to the political adversary, to the enemy with whom one is confronted in open warfare, but equally to one's own fellow-countrymen, to one's own class and party comrades with whom one deals on the basis of common laws, associations and forms of organisation.

We know that these conclusions have in fact been reached, not by cynics and fascists alone, but also by political groups whose avowed aim is a classless socialist society. Programmes, slogans, agreements sponsored by these groups or their leaders are treated by them as mere instruments in the establishment of power positions. They are adhered to as long as they help in the attainment and extension of political influence. When, however, they no longer serve this purpose or when incompatible slogans or alliances seem more expedient, the former programmes are forgotten and the old promises broken as if they had never existed.

Such methods have rightly been denounced as demoralising and poisonous in their effect on political life. It has come to the point that when one deals with people who use these methods, one has to be ready for everything—for lies, treachery, the violation of recognised laws and standards. Thus it has actually become impossible to co-operate with them with any confidence. There can be no human intercourse worthy of the name, i.e., based on mutual understanding and not upon force, except in so far as one can trust one's partner's promises and statements. The maxim that the end justifies the means has therefore destroyed the very foundation on which human confidence and co-operative effort can be built.

What, then, are we to put in place of this maxim? Is

it always wrong to tell lies and to break promises, no matter who is being deceived and for what purpose it is done ? Any-one who goes so far in the rejection of considerations of expediency may at any time find himself sacrificing to his rigid righteousness the very end for which he cares. Take, for instance, the case of the illegal struggle in oppressed Europe against the Nazi régime. To refuse to attempt to over-reach and deceive the enemy would have meant abandoning the struggle. Now it is certainly easy to argue that one has no obligation to keep faith with an opponent who by his crimes has placed himself beyond the bounds of law and order. If, however, one exception is permitted, the problem arises as to where exactly is the borderline between justified and unjustified lying. Are lying and deceit permissible only when we are faced with a political opponent who uses such means himself ? It is impossible to draw the line here, because it often becomes necessary to deny the truth to people who, though not opponents themselves, might otherwise betray it. Moreover, it is quite impossible to say in advance what methods may prove necessary in the fight for a better social order, and anyone who is seriously concerned with this aim might be faced with the necessity of making himself responsible for a lie or breach of faith.

People often try to evade this difficulty by saying that a good end can never be served by bad means. Instead of solving the problem, this suggestion obscures the issue. The problem is whether the means are bad if they are necessary in the attainment of a good end. Experience has taught us that there are only two possible courses open to people who are reluctant to touch pitch for fear of being defiled: they will either withdraw from the political arena altogether, or else they will sooner or later abandon this principle because the necessities of the political struggle make them do so. This attitude, therefore, results in practice either in abandoning the aim, or serving it with a bad conscience, and therefore half-heartedly. It provokes the equally justified criticism of the "realists" that these moral reservations are really only a pretext to evade the most urgent tasks of our time.

There are a number of other problems which shed some light on this conflict between these two incompatible modes of thought. There is, for instance, the important question of the consideration which an individual may claim in the course of a political action for his personal rights, claims and wishes. From the standpoint of the maxim that the end justifies the means, the individual is a mere instrument to achieve that end. In that case, the way he is treated will depend only on the consideration whether he is a useful means to that end or whether he is or might become an obstacle in the way. If he is useful, he should be used, if he is an obstacle, he must be rendered harmless, in either case he has no right to a say even as to the way the one thing or the other happens. Here, too, experience shows where, in practice, this attitude leads. It has made individuals mere mouthpieces of political parties, prepared at the command of their leaders to turn a political somersault overnight without taking the least account of the relation between this political turn and the political aim originally adopted. In these men and women who have been used as mere instruments in the political struggle for the betterment of human society, the very thing on which the struggle should have been based has been destroyed: the realisation of their responsibility for the life of society and their constant endeavour to think out what ought to be done in recognition of this responsibility.

This attitude too has naturally been criticised and challenged. Its opponents have appealed to Kant's maxim that the reasonable human being should never consider himself and others merely as means but always as ends in themselves. But what does this imply in political life? A political party, sure of its common aims and determined to use its available forces to achieve them, is dependent on the discipline of its members and their readiness to conform. It is not always possible to thrash out differences of opinion before deciding on a certain course of action. What is to be done? The fear of becoming mere tools in case of such a conflict has again and again held people back from joining a political party, and as a result they have not seriously participated

at all in the struggle for a better state of society. It, in the first instance, the individual is ruthlessly sacrificed to the exigencies of the political struggle, we find, in the second case, the tendency to renounce the struggle itself whenever it threatens to obstruct the development of the personality. Is there a way out, which avoids both the danger of being unscrupulous in choosing the means and that of being so scrupulous in the choice of means as to imperil the aim itself?

THE CHOICE OF LEGITIMATE MEANS

Do our ethical and political convictions provide us with a clear answer to the question of what political means we are justified in using? That is the test of their realism. Our investigation has at least shown that this question cannot be answered with a kind of catalogue, listing on one side the means ethically permissible, and, on the other side, those which are not. Consideration of what is good and desirable has again and again led us to the task of weighing the claims arising in each set of circumstances against each other. The requirement of justice is merely that in a conflict of interests the decision shall depend, not upon the physical, economic or other superiority of one partner, but only upon the weighing up of the interests themselves and their importance to the person who holds them. Nobody has a right which exists once and for all, independent of a particular conflict of interests.

It has, however, frequently been alleged that there is such a thing as a natural right, for instance, the right to live, the right to the product of one's own labour, the right to the free development of one's personality, or the right not to be cheated and deceived. It is easy enough to understand why people think that these rights should be maintained in all circumstances and without exception. In all these instances important interests are concerned, conditions which enable us to make something sensible and valuable of our lives.

Nobody is entitled, without very good reasons, to deprive another person of this possibility or to hinder his using it.

Nevertheless, it remains true that there are higher values than life, or than the other values in question. Their significance is to be found in the fact that they help us to live for something worth devoting our lives to, something which we recognise as greater and more important than life itself and its pleasures. Thus there are clearly higher claims than the interests mentioned, and it may well be that we have to choose between these interests and those higher claims, between our own interests in life and freedom and property and those of our fellow men. Therefore none of these interests has the unlimited, unconditional claim of a right. They all cease to be justifiable as soon as they clash with the weightier claims of others.

Having made this clear, we have disposed of the argument that bad means are unavoidable in politics. Those who support this contention usually refer to encroachments on important human interests such as we have mentioned: to the sacrifice of human lives, robbery and theft, lying, cheating and violence. The use of such means, it is true, cannot always be avoided, inasmuch as the object is to intervene in the distribution of power in society and to reform it. Whether this is justified or not depends, as always, on the weighing up of the conflicting interests. The question therefore is, what we risk when we shrink back from such interference with human life, goods and values, and what we sacrifice by such interference.

In so far as the means in question are necessary in the struggle for a better social order, the interest in this aim must be taken into account in their favour. What weight it has in the scale depends on the clarity and sureness with which the purpose is envisaged. If it has been adopted as the result of really careful consideration about the proper aims of social endeavour, then it rests on our interest in the just solution of the conflicts which arise. Our earlier conclusion that the effort towards social justice is an indispensable condition of the value of any social order is the direct application of the principle of justice to the life of society. Since all conflicts between human beings ought to be settled justly and not

unilaterally in favour of the stronger or most influential party, it follows that all social institutions and claims are wrong which merely protect privileges, and conflict with the establishment of just conditions. It is right to insist that people should strive to create a social order where right is done. This demand should therefore have priority wherever it clashes with other claims, wishes, or ideals. No price is too high if it is necessary to pay it to achieve this aim.

We have thus acknowledged the principle which is usually quoted in support of the rule that the end justifies the means. The end in this case is an essential requirement of justice, and is therefore more important than any interests that may clash with it. For no interest is justified if it can only be satisfied by the perpetuation of unjust social conditions. That is the crucial point.

Once we clearly understand the basis of this idea we are able to avoid that fatal conclusion that any means is justified if the end in view deserves preference. Our consideration started with the criticism, brought against this policy of expediency, that the choice of means ought to be judged by the same standards of justice and morality as the choice of the end itself. We have found no reason to contradict this thesis, nor even to limit its application. If it has been said that where interests clash the fight for social justice should have preference, this does not mean an unlimited license to use any means. Here again we have to weigh fairly the interests concerned. Where human life and human freedom are at stake, where broken pledges or cheating are involved, the justification of such means requires more than the mere explanation that they are necessary in order to achieve political power which is to serve laudable ends. The question is whether the new power attained by the use of these means would be decisive and would really be used in the struggle for a just society, and also whether this step on the way to the just end could not be taken without injury to the values violated in this case. From the point of view of mere expediency these two questions are meaningless, because this point of view is concerned only with whether a form of

behaviour is useful in the service of a given end.

Thus there is a kernel of truth in both the attitudes in question. If we adhere to the principle of reaching our decisions by means of the impartial weighing up of conflicting interests, then we can reconcile the elements of truth in both attitudes and avoid the unsound conclusions which have been drawn from each of them. We then see that whilst the fight for just social conditions has priority over conflicting aims it is nevertheless not an end which justifies the use of any means. We also see that conscientiousness in the choice of political methods does not lead to the abandonment of the desired end.

But have we not reached this theoretically satisfactory result at the price of accepting a principle which is extremely difficult to apply? The principle that the interests involved in an action should be weighed up against each other makes it necessary constantly to check up whether our own decisions are justified. This continual re-examination of our actions can be replaced neither by the choice of the right aim once and for all, nor by the application of self-evident rules which would differentiate between permissible and impermissible ways of acting. It requires us to be constantly on the alert, questioning whether our decisions have taken due account of the justified claims of others. This task is made even more difficult by the limited nature of all human knowledge and human experience. Nobody can with certainty foretell all the consequences which will follow from a decision of importance in his life. When weighing conflicting interests and estimating their respective values we shall therefore encounter problems which we can only solve to the best of our ability, but which will always entail the risk of our sizing up the situation wrongly and failing to recognise the interests involved in their right proportions.

Is it necessary for the politician to enter into these problems? There is certainly a temptation to avoid them, and this is what has, in fact, happened time and time again. Those who maintain that the end justifies the means think that considerations of this kind are an unnecessary burden

on a politician, distracting his attention and energy from the only thing that matters, the successful achievement of his progressive political programme. Those who, for well-founded reasons, reject this maxim but who do not credit human beings with the intelligence and will-power to make right decisions, look for the support of simple, clear-cut rules which would enable them to distinguish, once and for all, between means which are permissible and means which are not permissible. Both these views lead us astray. Our aim, the application of the principle of justice in the life of human society, does not make sense unless it is based upon the claim that conflicts of interests should be justly resolved. It can, therefore, be grasped and adhered to only by people who recognise that this principle of justice is a direct claim of their own understanding. To accept this aim but to fail to apply the principle of justice to the means that are to achieve it, reveals a lack of comprehension which leads, sooner or later, to our losing sight of the end itself.

It is, therefore, not a matter of indifference how we justify and defend our aim. We must remember its origin. It was not forced upon us by the natural course of social development, nor by a dictator wielding power, nor by the aspirations of a social class. We acquired it by gradually clarifying and deepening the first spontaneous valuations which people apply to social events. The end must therefore be pursued in such a way that its advocates can appeal to this common understanding, and that every person of good will can see that this political group represents what his own sense of justice will, on reflection, require. For this, it is essential that the political group in question should enjoy and deserve the confidence that, not only in the choice of its aims, but also in its organisational structure and tactical method and especially in the selection and training of its officials, it is motivated by considerations of justice.

THE TRUE UNION OF ETHICS AND POLITICS

This brings us back to the point from which we started.

We asked ourselves how political life could be cleansed of the social evils which have converted the great achievements of human industry and invention into instruments of destruction and oppression. Industry and inventiveness themselves obviously offer no safeguard against this danger—they have indeed been frequently used to serve man's selfish ends and blind lust for power. But what about the demand so frequently heard that we should look to moral principles and ethical forces to show us the way out of chaos?

We now have an answer. In our civilisation, industry and inventiveness have almost exclusively been used as a means to study and control the forces of nature and society. Scientific progress in the last century was primarily a great advance in natural science and technique. The one-sided nature of this development had grave consequences. In the natural sciences attention is concentrated on the investigation of the causes of events and the natural forces under which they occur, and scientists have therefore tended to overlook the ethical question of the value of human actions and aspirations. This does not mean that the question was not raised. It arises whenever a person seriously examines the meaning of his life. This happens, and will always happen, even though unorthodox scientists describe such enquiries as thoroughly unscientific, and as the mere subjective opinions of individuals.

The one-sided verdict of the scientists has had the disastrous consequence of shaking the belief that the spontaneous moral judgment can be developed into a reliable understanding of the truth. But where the public affairs of human society are concerned—the question, for instance, of what ought to be done in the life of society and in what respects protection from the arbitrary interference of individuals is called for, or what rules should govern the relations between members of a nation and between different nations—an answer based on mere opinion is not good enough, for the feelings and prejudices of one person might conflict with those of another. We need a better safeguard than emotional decisions, for two reasons. First, because our spontaneous judgment loses its sureness when it is applied to events which we do not per-

sonally witness. Social interactions, with the resulting interdependencies of individuals and groups, cannot be so simply observed that the weighing up of the interests affected at each stage can be safely left to our spontaneous feeling for right and wrong. Secondly, in these important public matters, decisions involving the principle of justice should be made and defended in a way which enables all concerned to see they are just and right. It will not do to rely on mere feelings, which by their very nature do not permit of rational justification or explanation.

These ethical questions must therefore receive the same careful attention and consideration as modern scientists apply in their own province. It has been our purpose clearly to define this task and to seek for the principles and general pattern of the political structure which, according to the ethical conception of justice, should be established in human society. In a sense our aim is merely a beginning. For it confronts us with a number of further questions, the answers to which are beyond the scope of the present work, questions concerned with problems of the application of these principles in the life of society. Among them are first empirical questions about the existing social relations and forces to which the general principles of justice and freedom have to be applied in order to produce concrete ethical demands. Secondly, there are the problems of their realisation, of the measures necessary to ensure their fulfilment.

The present investigation has enabled us to state these problems of realisation and to recognise the direction in which we must seek their solution. One is the problem of the education of political workers who are able and willing to adopt the ideas of right and justice as the guiding principle of their decisions. And the other is the problem of what organisation and structure of political parties, and of the State, is necessary to provide these political workers with the opportunity to bring about social conditions in keeping with these ideals.

Each of these questions requires a thorough investigation of its own, undertaken with the same methods of considera-

tion as we have employed here These further investigations represent the next step towards the realisation of that enterprise from which alone we may expect to overcome the present crisis of human society : by the true union of " human morals and enlightened human politics " which will enable us " to place the great inventions of modern technology into the hands of good, decent people in a decent and well-guided social and state organisation "

